

How does solution-focused supervision respond to the needs of experienced counsellors for clinical supervision?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Counselling
in the University of Canterbury

by Aase Møllemose Bechsgaard

College of Education, Health and Human Development
University of Canterbury

2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their support in completing this thesis.

First of all, I want to thank my primary supervisor, Dr Lois Tonkin, who supported me throughout the whole process. I am grateful for her professional encouragement and especially for her belief in me as a qualitative researcher. I also want to thank my second supervisor, Dr Shanee Barraclough, for sharing her remarkable knowledge and kind flexibility supporting my journey to finish this thesis.

A special acknowledgement is due to the participants who willingly took part in this research, giving me their valuable time. Thanks for believing in this project and showing genuine interest in my research. I am incredibly appreciative of your trust in me and your honesty and openness, which gave me fantastic material to work with.

An expression of thanks to David Roys who kindly helped me by proofreading early drafts and remarkably found the time in a busy schedule.

I especially want to thank Philippa Drayton for highly valuable support editing my final drafts.

This thesis could not have been written without my husband, Mogens. I am grateful for his never fading faith in me and my ability to finish this research. Thank you for your outstanding patience, loyalty, and support.

Abstract

Six experienced counsellors in New Zealand participated in semi-structured interviews and reflected on how solution-focused supervision could meet their needs for clinical supervision. The participating counsellors all use a solution-focused approach to some extent within their practice. The thesis describes whether, and how, these counsellors found solution-focused supervision useful for their professional practice and how it was used in their clinical supervision. This qualitative study takes a social constructionist stance, and a solution-focused approach framed the interview guide. Mind maps and a thematic analytic frame were used to organise and analyse the data.

Clinical counselling supervision based on a solution-focused approach can, according to the results of this study, have a valuable role in meeting the needs of securing safe and effective professional counselling practice and supplying restorative support. The study also suggests that solution-focused supervision can be a useful resource for ongoing professional growth and development. The importance of the supervisory relationship stands out, and the participants' detailed description of how a solution-focused approach was used in their supervision can inspire both counsellors and their supervisors. In addition to the positive findings, the study also described limitations in the use of a solution-focused approach in counselling supervision, including a need to give sufficient time and attention to the issue brought into supervision.

Based on this study, further research is worthwhile to explore the role of solution-focused supervision. Further research into how solution-focused supervision might be useful for counsellors working from other modalities and whether different supervisory modalities present variations in the significance of the positive supervisory relationship is also suggested. Further research on a potential positive client outcome of solution-focused supervision is tentatively suggested. Implications for supervisors and counsellors are discussed, and more research using thematic analysis and mind maps is recommended.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
This Study.....	2
The Context of the Study.....	3
The Rationale for the Study.....	4
The Purpose of this Thesis	6
The Research Question.....	7
Thesis Organisation.....	8
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	10
Clinical Supervision in Counselling.....	10
Definition of clinical supervision.	10
Aims and purposes of clinical supervision.	12
Characteristics of good supervision and a good supervisor.....	13
The supervisory relationship.....	16
Summary of the literature about clinical supervision in counselling.....	17
A Solution-focused Approach	18
Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.....	18
Fundamental assumptions in a solution-focused approach.	21
Summary of the literature about SFBT and the solution-focused assumptions.....	24
Solution-focused Supervision.....	24
Research on Solution-focused Supervision	28
Definition of solution-focused supervision for the purpose of this thesis.	30
Chapter 3 - Epistemology, Methodology, Method and Research Design.....	32
Researcher’s Worldview and Epistemology	32
Methodological Frame	35
Method.....	38
Reflexivity.	38
Recruitment and selection of participants.....	39
Semi-structured interviews.	41

The interview guide.	43
Data gathering and analysis method.	46
Thematic analysis.	47
Mind maps used as a tool in the thematic analysis.	48
The analysis processes.	49
Ethical considerations.	51
Chapter 4 - Presentation of the Findings.....	53
Best hopes from participating in solution-focused supervision.....	53
Definition of needs for supervision for the purpose of this thesis.	56
Presentation of the findings.	56
Theme One: A Solution-Focused Approach used in Supervision.....	59
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category A: Effect of solution-focused questions.	59
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category B: Solution-focused techniques.....	62
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category C: Sharing and celebrating successes.	63
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category D: Reminded skills and resources.	64
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category E: Validation and affirmation. ..	66
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category F: Modelling the solution-focused stance.	67
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category G: Takeaway from solution-focused supervision.	69
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category H: Limitations	70
A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category I: Compensate.	73
Summary of theme one – A solution-focused approach used in supervision.	74
Theme Two: The Supervisory Relationship.....	77
The supervisory relationship – Category A: Description.	77
The supervisory relationship – Category B: Longevity.....	79
The supervisory relationship – Category C: Choice.....	81
The supervisory relationship – Category D: Supporter.	85
Summary of theme two – The supervisory relationship.	88
Theme Three: The Role of Solution-focused Supervision.....	90
The role of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Support.	90

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Sharing and being reminded.....	92
The role of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Emotional response.	93
The role of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Safety.....	95
The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Good practice.....	98
The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Effect on clients and colleagues.	100
The role of solution-focused supervision – Category F: Learning.	101
Summary of theme three: The role of solution-focused supervision.	103
Theme Four: The Content of Solution-focused Supervision.....	105
The content of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Combination of issues.	106
The content of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Casework.	107
The content of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Workplace and colleagues.	109
The content of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Personal issues.....	110
The content of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Professional development.	112
Summary of theme four: The content of solution-focused supervision.....	114
Chapter 5 – Discussion	116
Discussion of the Findings	116
Theme one: A solution-focused approach used in supervision.	116
Theme two: The supervisory relationship.	119
Theme three: The role of solution-focused supervision.	121
Theme four: The content of solution-focused supervision.....	125
Summary of the discussion of the findings.....	126
Learning for Counsellors and Solution-focused Supervisors.....	128
Implications for Clinical Counselling Supervision	128
Ethics, Strengths, and Limitations of This Study.....	129
Ethical considerations.....	129
Limitations and strengths.....	130
Suggestions for Further Research.....	132
Conclusion.....	134
References.....	137
Appendices.....	146
Appendix A - Certificate Compass Seminars NZ	147
Appendix B – Human Ethics Committee Approval	148
Appendix C - Information Sheet	149

Appendix D - Consent Form	151
Appendix E - Invitation to Participants	152
Appendix F – The Interview Guide.....	154
Appendix G - List of Mind Maps.....	155

List of Figures

Figure 1: Theme 1: A Solution-Focused Approach used in Supervision	59
Figure 2: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category A: Effect of solution-focused questions	60
Figure 3: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category B: Solution-focused techniques	62
Figure 4: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category C: Sharing and celebrating successes.....	63
Figure 5: Theme 1 A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category D: Reminded of skills and resources	65
Figure 6: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category E: Validation and affirmation.....	66
Figure 7: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category F: Modelling the solution-focused stance	68
Figure 8: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category G: Takeaway from solution-focused supervision.....	69
Figure 9: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category H: Limitations...71	
Figure 10: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category I: Compensate.73	
Figure 11: Theme 2: The Supervisory Relationship	77
Figure 12: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category A: Description	78
Figure 13: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category B: Longevity.....	79
Figure 14: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category C: Choice	82
Figure 15: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship – Category D: Supporter.....	86
Figure 16: Theme 3: The Role of Solution-focused Supervision	90
Figure 17: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Support.....	91
Figure 18: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Sharing and being reminded.....	92
Figure 19: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Emotional response.93	
Figure 20: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Safety	96
Figure 21: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Good practice	99
Figure 22: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Effect on clients and colleagues.....	100
Figure 23: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category F: Learning.....	102
Figure 24: Theme 4: The Content of Solution-focused Supervision	105
Figure 25: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Combination of issues	106
Figure 26: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Casework.....	108
Figure 27: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Workplace and colleagues.....	109
Figure 28: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Personal issues	110
Figure 29: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Professional development	113

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The interest I have in clinical counselling supervision is based on twenty-five years of practice as a social worker in Denmark with broad experience in both receiving and providing supervision. Most have been group-based and had an evident emphasis on what was done wrong, why it did not work, and what ought to have been done instead. I remember a feeling of guilt and doubt leaving most of those supervision sessions. Now I am completing a Master of Counselling programme which has a strong solution-focused emphasis, in New Zealand. I wonder now what an approach with a focus on what works well, what could be done more of, and what else could be done, could benefit my clinical supervision in the long term as a counsellor. I leave my current solution-focused counselling supervision feeling empowered, validated, and supported. I have been able to take this feeling of genuine encouragement and belief in my skills and abilities with me into the counselling room, and I feel that it makes me a better counsellor. In my reflective notes from solution-focused supervision, I highlighted my professional development and learning and my growing confidence in my use of solution-focused questions and techniques. A significant feature in my evaluating reflections on solution-focused supervision is the increased feeling of identifying myself as a solution-focused counsellor. My personal experience is that solution-focused supervision has been able to respond to my needs, as a trainee counsellor, for clinical supervision, of securing a safer and more effective professional practice, of fostering a lot of learning and growth, of building a strong professional identity and of heightening my level of confidence, and especially of taking care of my needs for support, kindness, and validation during the process.

Those reflections on my personal experience of counselling supervision prompted an interest in finding out how other counsellors might benefit from solution-focused supervision, with a focus on whether it meets their needs for clinical supervision, and in what ways. My curiosity in exploring how solution-focused supervision can help to maintain and develop a safe, ethical, and

effective practice for counsellors is also, in part, motivated by literature such as Pichot (2005), Thomas (1994), Thomas (2013) and Waskett (2006), who explain how solution-focused supervision can empower the supervisee and can be professionally beneficial by emphasising the focus on the successes, what is done well, and the attention to strengths, rather than a focus on deficits and problems. Thomas (2013) emphasises that solution-focused supervision is a time-tested instrument to endorse strengths and builds on the supervisee's resources. He describes how the supervisor holds a solution-focused stance that is brought into a collaborative relationship between supervisor and supervisee. It is a supervisory relationship that builds on assumptions from a solution-focused way of thinking and targets to develop and maintain skills and competencies.

This Study

This study explores how solution-focused supervision responds to the clinical supervision needs of six experienced counsellors, who all to some extent worked from a solution-focused approach. Clinical supervision is a contractual, collaborative, and confidential relationship between a practising counsellor and a supervisor with either a level of training in supervision or lengthier counselling experience. Clinical supervision aims to contribute to improving the counsellor's professional competencies, continued development and professional growth, self-awareness, and reflexivity. Clinical supervision is also an essential element in securing the welfare and safety of the clients (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Campbell, 2000; Watkins & Milne, 2014).

It is beyond the scope of this study to compare solution-focused supervision with other approaches to supervision, but research shows that a solution-focused approach can significantly increase positive affect, goal achievement, and self-efficacy (Braunstein & Grant, 2016; Grant, 2012; Grant & O'Connor, 2010) as well as being efficient in its use of resources.

This study explores solution-focused supervision from the perspective of experienced counsellors with the intention of describing the needs and role of clinical supervision as it relates to experienced counsellors in New Zealand. For the purpose of this study, an experienced counsellor is defined as someone who has a degree in the field of counselling, or a closely related field of study, and has a minimum of ten years of counselling experience. The focus in this research is on experienced counsellors, partly because there is a lack of research into the effect of supervision on experienced counsellors' practice (S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007) and partly because of my own positive experiences of solution-focused supervision. I became curious about whether my increased feeling of being energised and motivated by participating in solution-focused supervision was also present for others and whether solution-focused supervision might be useful in enhancing the professional practice of experienced counsellors. During 25 years of practice as a social worker, I had experienced how vital resilience and perseverance are to professional longevity and to the ability to maintain a professional commitment to the profession. Grant (2012) makes similar observations in his study based on coaching of 225 psychology students at an Australian university.

The Context of the Study

Counsellors in New Zealand must remain engaged in regular supervision both in their training period and while working as qualified counsellors. The New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) is the national professional association acting for and with counsellors working in education, health, social service agencies, and private practice. Its aim is to monitor and improve the service provided by their members. NZAC has a strong commitment to supervision and a comprehensive Code of Ethics that recommends one hour of supervision every fortnight as an average for counsellors in fulltime practice, and in addition, outlines these relevant principles:

1.1 The profession of counselling requires that all practising counsellors seek supervision. Supervision supports accountability to clients, employers, the public and the Association.

1.2 Professional supervision is a primary resource for every counsellor in the maintenance and development of safe, ethical and effective practice.

(New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2015, p. 1).

This strong valuing and commitment to clinical counselling supervision qualify research such as this study into the effect of supervision performed in New Zealand as being suitable and valid.

The six participating counsellors in this study have between 14 and 32 years of experience as counsellors with clients in a variety of settings: secondary school, health agency, government agency, and private practice. The participants represent a cross-section of ethnicities and genders, which further contributes to the usefulness of the study.

The Rationale for the Study

Requirements for supervision of counsellors vary in different countries, and most research into supervision has taken place in the United States of America (USA) where only trainee counsellors routinely participate in supervision (S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007). As a consequence, most research into counsellor supervision has focused on supervisees that are new or trainee counsellors. Trainee counsellors are counsellors in training—masters-level students in an internship (Lenz, Oliver, & Sangganjanavanich, 2014) for example—and new counsellors are counsellors who have only a few years of experience as counsellors.

The counselling profession worldwide has a high level of attention and value to supervision and Mearns (1995) suggests that counsellors should be proud of that. He highlights the influence of the requirements to counselling supervision, in the UK, set by British Association for Counselling (BAC), which are largely comparable with the recommendations and expectation of NZAC. He

explains how in “other professions, such as social work, supervision is relegated to a peripheral activity concerned only with managerial functions and highly subject to the ‘cancel if anything more important turns up’ principle.” (Mearns, 1995, p. 421). This description is familiar to me through my personal experiences of supervision as a practising social worker in Denmark.

Research is limited in relation to supervision practices in long-term, and a review of eighteen published studies exploring counselling supervision in the UK (S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007) highlighted the need for more research on supervision that examines long-term supervision and experienced practitioners.

Research has explored how experience matters for a practitioner and claims “becoming a master therapist is more than just an accumulation of time and experience” (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999, p. 9). Their research hypothesised that experienced practitioners had both developed cognitive, emotional, and relational skills at a high level and used those successfully in their practice working with clients (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999). Other studies have explored how counsellors with more than 15 years of post-doctorate experience see themselves as trusting their professional judgements and feeling confident and able to regulate their emotions (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). These studies support a rationale for more research on clinical supervision based on the understanding of experienced counsellors, whose primary requirement for clinical supervision, according to research, is to be aware of the continual learning from both the clients and from their own life (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Experienced counsellors in New Zealand seem to be engaged— to a significant extent— in clinical supervision (Kazantzis et al., 2009) and this is probably partly because members of NZAC are expected to be in regular and ongoing professional supervision. Kazantzis et al. (2009) surveyed 123 counsellors from a wide range of countries, including New Zealand, and their findings show that counsellors in New Zealand are highly involved in supervision throughout their career and

regard supervision having a strong and positive influence on their ongoing professional development. Their research findings also show that there seems to be no change in the benefit that the counsellors see in clinical supervision, regardless of the level of experience.

It has been argued that clinical supervision is proven effective when used as part of training counsellor skills (Bambling, 2000) but it has been more difficult to show significant results in demonstrating a rich link between supervision and the continued development of counsellor competence, which indicates a need for more research to explore how experienced counsellors use and benefit from clinical supervision. Also in research into supervision based on a solution-focused approach, a majority of the studies have focused on the experiences of trainee counsellors, (Lenz et al., 2014; J. H. Miller, 2010; Stark, Garza, Bruhn, & Ane, 2015)

The Purpose of this Thesis

Since previous research has not addressed the ways in which solution-focused supervision supports counsellors' continued development, the purpose of this study is to explore whether and how experienced counsellors find solution-focused supervision meets their needs for clinical supervision. A major motivation in researching this topic is to develop my own professional competencies. It arises from my need to gain more knowledge of counsellor supervision—and of solution-focused supervision in particular—because one element in my professional preferred future is to develop the skills needed to become a clinical supervisor for counsellors or social workers, which would integrate my two educational backgrounds. I expect that my exploration of how solution-focused supervision works for experienced counsellors will support me in making my own choices about my ongoing supervision at a more informed level, and it might also support other counsellors and supervisors in making their choices about supervision. My exploration of how

solution-focused supervision is useful for experienced counsellors in New Zealand might also inform readers on the importance and benefits of career-long clinical counsellor supervision.

Supervision based on a solution-focused approach has a distinct focus on what is already working, which I will elaborate on in my review of the literature in Chapter two. This focus makes it reasonable to explore whether clinical supervision based on a solution-focused approach can fulfil counsellors' requirements to having supervisory support when working with challenging cases and how solution-focused supervision can support counsellors when they are getting stuck or run short of options.

The Research Question

I have been informed by literature, research and my own experience of supervision in developing the research question for this study. I intended to explore how solutions-focused supervision can satisfy the needs of clinical supervision for experienced counsellors mainly because of the described gap in the research literature. As a current trainee counsellor, I experienced solution-focused supervision and the ways it supported my learning, growth and developing a stronger identity as a counsellor, and this motivated me to be curious and explorative about the nature and effect of solution-focused supervision. In this study, I explore solution-focused supervision from the perspective of experienced counsellors in New Zealand, where the professional association of counsellors (NZAC) has a high level of attention to the importance of counsellor supervision. I focused on exploring in what ways and how solution-focused supervision worked for the participants in their daily practice, what elements of solution-focused supervision made a difference for them and on describing the role and the content of solution-focused supervision. The research question for this study is:

How does solution-focused supervision respond to the needs of experienced counsellors for clinical supervision?

Thesis Organisation

This first chapter describes the background to the study, the context of studying experienced counsellors in New Zealand, the purpose of the study, define the research question and outline the structure of the thesis.

In Chapter two, I discuss relevant literature and research related to this study. In the first part of the literature review, the definition and purpose of clinical supervision in counselling is discussed. Second, to support understanding of the fundamentals and origin of solution-focused supervision, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy is described, and the central assumptions in the solution-focused approach are outlined. Third, solution-focused supervision is described; both literature on the practice of solution-focused supervision and research into its implementation and effectiveness.

In Chapter three, I describe my worldview, the methodological frame and the considerations for choosing qualitative research and using semi-structured interviews to guide my exploration of the usefulness of solution-focused supervision. In the method section, I describe the role of reflexivity, procedures for participant recruitment, and how the semi-structured interviews are based on a solution-focused approach. Then I explain the data collection, data analysis process including thematic analysis and the use of mind maps, and the interpretation process. I describe the ethical considerations of data collection and considerations on trustworthiness. I present essential ethical considerations of how to present the findings.

The findings are presented in Chapter four. I apply a definition of the needs for clinical supervision, merging the participants' best hopes from solution-focused supervision and the

purpose of clinical supervision from relevant research and literature. The findings present the four main themes that I identified, including categories, subcategories, and illustrative excerpts from the participant interviews. The interpretation of the findings is illustrated by incorporating mind maps to supplement the written presentation. The four central themes are: a solution-focused approach used in supervision, the supervisory relationship, the role of solution-focused supervision, and the content of solution-focused supervision.

In Chapter five, I discuss the four central themes separately in conjunction with the relevant literature. The most significant findings are: how solution-focused supervision is utilised as an integrated part of the participants' professional practice, highlighting the factors of focusing on successes, collaboration, modelling, and feeling energised; the influence of the supervisory relationship, especially the significance of choice and modelling; the way the participants perceive the role of solution-focused supervision emphasising safety, support, trust, and professional development; and that the experienced counsellors mainly bring casework, workplace issues, and personal or emotional responses to their solution-focused supervision. Learning and implications for counsellors and supervision practice are discussed highlighting the usefulness of a solution-focused approach applied in clinical supervision for counsellors, and the importance of the supervisory relationship. The strengths and limitations of the study are outlined, the analytic method is analysed and the ethical aspects are described. Recommendations for further research into how solution-focused supervision can be useful for counsellors are suggested. A call for further research on whether solution-focused supervision could potentially effect client outcome and contribute to the prevention of burn-out in helping professions is tentatively suggested. Further qualitative research using mind maps in the thematic analysis is additionally recommended.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

In the first part of this review, I discuss the definition and purpose of clinical supervision in the counselling profession. Secondly, to support the understanding of the fundamentals and origin of solution-focused supervision, the history, origin, and fundamental assumptions from Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) are outlined. After that, I describe the history and practice of solution-focused supervision encompassing the isomorphic relationship of SFBT and solution-focused supervision. Finally, I review the most significant research into the implementation and effectiveness of solution-focused supervision, leading to a rationale for the current research.

Clinical Supervision in Counselling

Definition of clinical supervision.

There are many different definitions of supervision in the research literature, and in this first section, I focus on describing some of the most used definitions of clinical supervision for counsellors. The word supervision originates from the two Latin words *super* [above] and *videre* [see, observe]. The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus explains that supervision is the act of watching a person or activity and making sure that everything is done correctly and safely. In counselling, clinical supervision refers to sessions with another professional from the same profession aiming to debrief and mentally process the client work (Bradley & Ladany, 2001).

Many researchers have contributed to defining clinical counselling supervision, and most of them agree that supervision contains elements of teaching, training, counselling, mentoring, consultation, and evaluation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Pelling, Barletta, & Armstrong, 2009). It is crucial that the way the counsellor works with the client is raised and discussed in the supervisory meeting, and hence the principal purposes of supervision are the welfare and safety of the clients

and the professional development of the supervisee (Westergaard, 2013). Some literature defines supervision as the process whereby a senior member of a profession supervises a less experienced member of the same profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009), stressing the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship. This definition has been a core base for other researchers and authors in the field of clinical supervision especially from the USA (Proctor, 1994). Other literature stresses the hierarchical nature of supervision with less emphasis and defines supervision as a supportive colleague helping the practitioner to examine their professional decisions (Barletta, 2009), interventions, and effectiveness, and to enhance the connection between theory and practice (Pelling et al., 2009). This definition is described similarly by Alrø and Kristiansen (2008), who define supervision as a professional conversation where the supervisee is encouraged by the supervisor to reflect on issues and actions in the supervisee's professional work. A definition emphasising the working alliance between the supervisor and the counsellor is provided by Inskipp and Proctor (Proctor, 1994) who highlight the elements of reflecting on the client work, supervisor feedback, and—when appropriate—guidance. An element of mentoring has also been mentioned in literature about clinical supervision described as a more collaborative and reciprocal relationship by Johnson (2007) who hypothesises that the element of mentoring could initiate better outcome of supervision for trainee psychologists.

For the purpose of this thesis, I define clinical supervision as a professional and collaborative conversation focusing on the supervisee's reflections on their professional practice with the purpose of securing safety and welfare for both the client and the counsellor and supporting the continued professional growth and development of the counsellor.

Aims and purposes of clinical supervision.

Clinical supervision has an impact on professional practice related to both the client work and the professional development of the counsellor. In addition, clinical supervision must contribute to the improvement of professional and ethical competence, continued development and professional growth, self-awareness, and reflexivity (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Pelling et al., 2009). The purpose of clinical supervision is often described with three different objectives: the normative, the formative, and the restorative (Cassedy, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Proctor, 1994). In the next section, I explain those objectives together with—for this study—relevant literature.

Clinical supervision is essential to secure the client's welfare and safety, and the supervisor has a role as a kind of gatekeeper with a normative purpose to secure the quality of the counselling (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Campbell, 2000; Watkins & Milne, 2014). Within this normative objective, supervision aims to observe the client work, monitor, and maintain good practice, and includes advice and suggestions for interventions. The supervisor has a responsibility to ensure that the supervisee's work is ethical, professional, and operating within the Code of Ethics of, in this case, NZAC (Cassedy, 2010; New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2016).

Clinical supervision contains training and educational aspects aiming to maintain and facilitate the supervisee's growing competence, capability, and general effectiveness (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Supervision gives the supervisee an opportunity to learn and to utilise that learning in their professional practice (Cassedy, 2010). This formative purpose can also benefit counsellors in their clinical supervision throughout their professional life, and after having gained extensive professional expertise (Pelling et al., 2009), especially when considerations to the level of expertise of the supervisee is implemented (Cassedy, 2010).

The restorative purpose has a more personal approach, in that it can fulfil the need for support and empowerment for the counsellor to practice self-care and prevent burn-out (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Research on how to prevent burn-out, compassion fatigue and stress among counsellors describe the importance of integrating elements of talking about the counsellor's emotional response and supporting their stress management (Baker, 2003; Kovač, Krečič, Čagran, & Mulej, 2016; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Supervision is supportive and restorative when disclosure of feelings and emotions is possible, and their reflections on the client work can be honest and open, which requires a confidential and safe environment (Pelling et al., 2009). The therapeutic element of supervision can be a natural and vital part of both the personal and professional growth and development of a counsellor by exploring how personal issues and emotional responses affect the therapeutic work with the clients, and in doing so, enhances required self-awareness (Campbell, 2000; S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007). A systematic review of the impact of supervision (S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007) looking at results from 18 quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies found that self-awareness, self-efficacy, and the experience of support were essential elements.

Supervision can also be a means for a counsellor to evolve their professional identity, whereby the purpose of supervision adapts to helping the counsellor to become a more effective professional (Campbell, 2000). Gaining or maintaining confidence and compassion in order to be the best possible counsellor are also essential elements in supervision (Proctor, 1994).

Characteristics of good supervision and a good supervisor.

A positive attitude towards supervision in the counselling profession has been described in literature by Mearns (1995, p. 421) who comments on the supportive and developmental nature of counselling supervision, writing that “the supervisee experiences the process as one which sustains

him or her both emotionally and intellectually and which thereby creates an implicit challenge to future working”.

Several researchers in the field of supervision have tried to identify what constitutes good supervision and a variety of characteristics have become associated with effective supervision. Gazzola and Theriault (2007) describe elements of the supervisee’s attitude that needs to be present in good supervision and include assertiveness, openness and acceptance towards the supervisor’s feedback as an opportunity to grow and learn, honouring the self, building patience, and tolerating ambiguity.

A study on supervision by Ellis et al. (2014) advocate that methods to prevent inadequate and harmful supervision could be found through increased understanding and identification of when it happens. Their study suggests that inadequate supervision may be less likely to occur if supervisors are mandated to receive training in supervision, or there is a requirement of regular supervision of the supervisors, which is a requirement for supervisors of counsellors in New Zealand (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2015).

Omand (2010) suggests that four essential elements are required in a useful supervision session: an account of what happened in the counselling session, a discussion of the thoughts and feelings of the supervisee at a deeper level, counsellor reflection to achieve a better understanding, and a focus on the future work with the client (Omand, 2010). The importance of integrating the clients’ perspective and experiences of what is effective directly into supervision has been highlighted in the literature (Duncan, Miller, & Sparks, 2004), who describe how a counsellor successfully can take ideas from the discussions in supervision to the next counselling session. This focus on what the clients find effective should according to Thomas (2013, p. 284) be “a top priority for supervisors”.

Characteristics including empathy, respect and genuineness, combined with self-knowledge, tolerance, and expertise have been viewed as important qualities of an ideal supervisor (Carifio & Hess, 1987). Effective supervisors have been found to use skills and techniques which encourage autonomy, strengthen the supervisory relationship, provide a constructive challenge, offer feedback, and enable open discussion (Ladany, Mori, & Mehr, 2013). West and Clark (2004) have through a qualitative study of what happened in supervisory dyads identified both hindering and helpful events in supervision. They described—in one of the dyads—the aspect of validation and the importance of what was said and not said in supervision.

Literature about supervision has tried to identify common factors across various models of supervision. Whatever approach used in supervision, the goal is to achieve positive clinical outcome and to help “the supervisee gain the attitude, skills, and knowledge needed to be a responsible and effective therapist.” (Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007, p. 7). Good supervision as described by Morgan and Sprenkle (2007) involves four supervisor roles: (1) Coaching - defined as assisting the supervisee with their client work – includes the activities of helping to maintain attention to the therapeutic relationship, offering suggestions how to proceed with a specific client and to offer feedback to the supervisee. (2) Teaching – defined as encouraging and facilitating knowledge and information – includes the activities of learning about skills and theories, and providing supervisees with relevant literature and research. (3) Mentoring – defined as focussing on the professional development and growth of the supervisee – includes working on personal and emotional responses to the professional practice, helping the supervisee to recognise their strengths and limitations, and nurturing professional development. (4) Administration – defined as a focus on broad ethical, legal, and professional standards – involves activities to protect both clients, counsellors and the counselling profession.

The importance of role modelling, particularly in the parallel process that emerges when the supervisor's behaviour correlates with their advice and guidance, and when they succeed in building a relationship that shows they intend to help the supervisee, have been highlighted as essential elements in effective clinical supervision (Barnett & Molzon, 2014; Jacobsen & Tanggaard, 2009).

In my exploration of how supervision based on a solution-focused approach can meet the needs of experienced counsellors, I will explore in what ways my participants find their supervision useful and how they describe the elements of good supervision.

The supervisory relationship.

The supervisory relationship, or working alliance, seems to be a critical component (Ladany et al., 2013) in good supervision. The supervisory relationship has been described as the central element in enhancing working patterns, which stem from supervision (Efstation, Patton, & Kardash, 1990) and how the relationship evolves over time. Other research has investigated the relationship between supervisee and supervisor within different experience levels (Renfro-Michel & Sheperis, 2009). These researchers explored 117 Master's level counselling students and could not indicate any difference in the attachment and bond to the supervisor connected to the participant's level of experience. A qualitative study (Worthen & McNeill, 1996) based on American intermediate-level to advanced-level trainee counsellors describes the supervisory relationship as being a fundamental component in supervision, primarily when it contains an attitude of empathy, a non-judgemental stance, a sense of validation, and encouragement to explore and experiment.

A study which explored the views and experiences of good supervision of nine experienced counsellors in the UK found that the supervisory relationship was the central component of good supervision and described how the participants highlighted a combination of safety, equality, and challenge (Weeks, 2002). Those findings are supported by other research (Ladany et al., 2013)

which describes how supervisees who experience a healthy and productive supervisory relationship highlight elements of support, respect, trust, open-mindedness, and encouragement in it.

Research of how established counsellors experienced the supervisory relationship showed that the counsellor's choice of supervisor seemed to be an essential element in establishing a good supervisory relationship (Lawton, 2000). Her research also described how the comfort in the relationship made the participants reluctant even to consider a shift, not believing that a new supervisor could be just as effective and want to stay in the safety of the familiar relationship as long as possible (Lawton, 2000).

The theoretical orientation and values of supervisees can be affected by their supervision and the relationship to their supervisors (S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007). A positive supervisory alliance can increase the counsellor's level of trust and build motivation to model the supervisor (Bambling, 2000). The theoretical orientation of the supervisor may initiate a different focus of the supervisory working alliance and might also initiate different aspects in the supervision depending on the supervisee's level of experience as found in a study on advanced level trainees (Efstation et al., 1990). Research by Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Crethar (1994) suggests that the behaviour of the supervisor and the nature of the supervisory relationship might change when counsellors become more experienced. Their review of supervision research leads them to recommend that further research explore which supervisory interventions are the most effective for experienced counsellors.

Summary of the literature about clinical supervision in counselling.

Clinical supervision in counselling is a working alliance between a practising counsellor and a supervisor with experience in, and knowledge about, counselling. Clinical counselling supervision aims to secure safe, ethical, and effective professional practice in client work; encourages professional development, learning, and growth; offers restorative support to secure the continued

wellbeing of the practising counsellor, and assists development of professional identity and confidence. Useful supervision requires self-awareness, reflection, and a focus on development for the counsellor. The supervisory relationship is an essential frame for effective clinical supervision, and a feeling of safety and equality and the elements of trust and respect seem to be critical. Those essential elements of clinical supervision in counselling will be core elements in this thesis exploring how supervision based on a solution-focused approach can meet the needs of experienced counsellors.

A Solution-focused Approach

My study explores how solution-focused supervision can provide useful and effective clinical supervision for experienced counsellors and in what ways the normative, formative and restorative roles of supervision are present and implemented.

Solution-focused supervision is a therapy-based approach understanding supervision as an extension of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), hence, a way of doing clinical supervision that is based on the core ideas and assumptions from SFBT. There is a significant linkage between solution-focused supervision and counselling practices of SFBT (Milne, 2009). To understand how a solution-focused approach informs and guides solution-focused supervision practice, I now give a picture of the history, origin, and fundamental assumptions of SFBT.

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.

SFBT is a therapeutic approach based on strengths that aims to help clients find their own way to influence and change a life situation by recognising solutions and strategies which they already are using with success (de Shazer et al., 1986). The primary and most known way to do SFBT can be accredited to Steve deShazer and Insoo Kim Berg from the Brief Therapy Centre in

Milwaukee, USA. SFBT is originally profoundly influenced by Milton Erickson, who used the learning that the client already had and supported them to use this learning in new situations (Jones-Smith, 2016). The founders of SFBT were also inspired by the work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, with emphasis on the importance of language (de Shazer, 1997).

SFBT is based on a social constructionist worldview with a significant focus on how people see the world through social relationships. It is premised on the understanding that reality is a social construction highlighting the role of communication and language when people construct this reality together (de Shazer, 1988; Guterman & Rudes, 2008; Xu, 2010).

A solution-focused stance requires a particular way of seeing the world and people. Parsons (2009) finds the fundamental skill of being a solution-focused practitioner is the ability to see what is going on with the special lenses of a solution-focused approach— not to see the client as a person looking for solutions—but to see a person who already has solutions which just need to be explored and put into words. Parsons (2009) encourages counsellors to focus on discovering the client's skills to cope, and be successful, whilst seeing themselves as competent and looking into their future more hopefully. Metcalf writes in *The Art of Solution Focused Therapy: The Masters Speak* (Connie & Metcalf, 2014) that SFBT is a unique mindset, a particular way of thinking. She notes the importance of changing the dialogue from problem-talk to solution-talk based on the assumptions that change can and will happen, and that there is always hope for a better future.

A primary technique in SFBT is to ask the 'miracle question' (de Shazer & Isebaert, 2004); a question designed to assist a client to imagine their preferred future, a time where the problem no longer exists or is less severe. Another essential technique in SFBT is looking for exceptions to become aware of successes that have already been happening. Scaling questions are used to focus on perspectives and to consider the level of motivation for change and how to make that change happen (De Jong & Berg, 2013). So called 'relationship questions' are used to invite the client to

describe their interactions with significant others and support exploring for solutions (De Jong & Berg, 2013). Compliments are also often used in SFBT to encourage and affirm what is important to the client, their successes, and their strengths and resources (De Jong & Berg, 2013; O'Connell, 1998). Berg and De Jong (2005, p. 51) describe three types of compliments, direct, indirect and self-compliments and state that “while there are several ways to begin the SF process, complimenting is among the simplest, easiest, and most useful”. Direct compliments in SFBT are statements based on observations of what might be helpful for the client to be more aware of. Indirect compliments are made by asking questions about what someone close to them would notice and thereby see the situation as someone who knows them well would see it. Self-complimenting is questions that support clients to explore and describe successes, strengths and skills themselves (Berg & De Jong, 2005). Language is used deliberately in SFBT to indicate that change inevitably will happen (De Jong & Berg, 2013; Hanton, 2011). The client’s problem is acknowledged and allowed to be aired in SFBT but will not be enquired into in an active way (Griffin & Christie, 2008). SFBT sees the life challenges with a balanced view, called a “binocular vision” by J. Wheeler (2001, p. 301); not only seeing the difficulties and problems the clients come with, but also their strengths and resources. Solution-focused practitioners share an experience that long-lasting changes come from talking about what has gone well and will emphasise the importance of a commitment to optimism, positive regard, and respecting that although problems may be complex, they may not need complex solutions (Griffin & Christie, 2008). The counsellor maintaining an empathic attitude towards the client’s worldview, establishing a positive relationship, and setting clear, specific objectives for their work together (Rakauskiene & Dumciene, 2013) is fundamental in SFBT.

A review and meta-analysis of studies on SFBT found that the strength oriented techniques were most effective compared to other techniques in SFBT (Franklin, Zhang, Froerer, & Johnson,

2017). They also discussed the importance of solution-focused language, highlighted the effect of the co-construction of meaning, and described the process of co-construction as a significant and active component of SFBT (Franklin et al., 2017).

Fundamental assumptions in a solution-focused approach.

It is an essential and fundamental assumption in a solution-focused approach that the presented problem does not determine the best direction and therefore SFBT mainly has an interest in exploring and elaborating the desired outcome (Durrant, 2017). Rather than trying to solve a problem, a solution-focused approach pays particular attention to identifying the preferred future and the existing and available resources such as strengths, relationships, and exceptions that can support and help to achieve the desired goal (de Shazer & Isebaert, 2004). A solution-focused approach does not try to identify a problem by giving it a name or by reading between the lines and is not interested in pathology or explanations, but rather focuses on the description of what the client or the supervisee wishes were different; hence it is not a goal to gain insight (Durrant, 2017). Taking the stance of not knowing and meeting the client or the supervisee as the expert in her own life is an essential base in a solution-focused approach (Hanton, 2011), and when the client or the supervisee is the expert in their own life and situation, they will be more motivated to work towards change. Change occurs when people can see new possibilities and how to do something differently—when feeling competent and successful—and is closely linked to motivation, which is more likely when the clients or the supervisees are viewed as competent and experience themselves as having agency (Durrant, 2017; Thomas, 2013). A solution-focused approach assumes that the client or the supervisee wants to change and that she has already started changing, supplemented with a genuine belief that she is doing her best (De Jong & Berg, 2013; Hanton, 2011). Change is seen as inevitable: “Change is so much a part of living that [people] cannot prevent themselves from

changing” (Berg & Miller, 1992, p. 11). A solution-focused approach has conscious attention on what already works, looking for exceptions to the problem, and what is happening when the problem is not present or not so severe. The focus on exceptions can also help to clarify and specify the goal or preferred future.

Bliss and Bray (2009) describe how de Shazer outlines some significant beliefs from a solution-focused approach, which are also core beliefs in solution-focused supervision. Illustrated by Bliss and Bray (2009, p. 65):

1. If it isn't broken, don't fix it
2. If it works, do more of it
3. If it's not working, do something different
4. Small steps can lead to big changes
5. The solution is not necessarily related to the problem
6. The language for solution development is different from the language needed to describe a problem
7. No problems happen all the time; there are always exceptions that can be utilized
8. The future is both created and negotiable

Thomas (2013, p 9) emphasises that the tenant which most clearly separates a solution-focused approach from other approaches is the idea that the solution is not necessarily related to a problem. G. Miller and de Shazer (1998, p. 5) discuss this, linking to Wittgenstein's language 'games', by stating that an active and conscious use of language can treat “one's problems and their source as irrelevant to the change process”. They also note that “solutions are part of a different language game that may be unconnected to the problems language game” (G. Miller & de Shazer, 1998, p. 5).

Solution-focused approaches have been evolved over more than 30 years, and there is an ongoing discussion in the worldwide solution-focused community of what defines something as solution-focused. Informed by literature and conversations with solution-focused colleagues, Durrant (2016) discusses what it means to work from a solution-focused approach highlighting four steps, that he notices need to be occurring to make anything solution-focused. He states that (1) it is essential to explore how the client (and in solution-focused supervision the supervisee) wants things to be different, that (2) the future-focus is essential, that (3) an exploration needs to be present of how some of the preferred future has already been achieved, and that (4) the counsellor (the supervisor) does not assume that they know what the client (the supervisee) needs to do to reach their preferred future (Durrant, 2016, p. 48). McKergow and Korman (2009) have described how they see the practice of a solution-focused approach and how it is different from other approaches. They note that a solution-focused practitioner deliberately highlights and actively comments on some of what a client says based on what the client wants and not on what she does not want, and they describe solution-focused as an ‘act of responding’. They list what solution-focused practitioners “don’t normally do at all” (McKergow & Korman, 2009, p. 38): Focus on what is wrong and why, ask what stops or blocks the client, diagnose, uses theories to understand what is going wrong, assume what is not said is more significant than what is said, or introduce abstract, mentalistic or systemic language neither in conversation nor in their thinking. McKergow (2016) describes solution-focused practices as a first-person approach by defining it as a focus on the client’s (supervisee’s) experiences rather than an attempt to understand it. He highlights the importance of listening to the individual client (supervisee), accept what she brings and to build the conversation upon that.

Summary of the literature about SFBT and the solution-focused assumptions.

SFBT is a therapeutic approach based on core solution-focused assumptions and focuses on the future. A solution-focused approach is a stance that posits that everybody is an expert in his or her own life, is competent, already has the resources and potential to manage the challenges of life, and has ideas about a preferred future. A strong valuing of the importance of and a deliberate use of language characterise a solution-focused approach. The most often used techniques in a solution-focused approach are a future and goal oriented ‘miracle question’, looking for exceptions, using scales, ‘relationship questions’, and compliments. The core assumptions in a solution-focused approach are built on the ideas of doing more of what works and doing something different when it is not working.

Solution-focused Supervision

Solution-focused supervision is clinical supervision that has the same goal as supervision working from any other approach of helping a counsellor to get the best possible professional outcome and includes general common factors in supervision. Morgan and Sprenkle (2007 p. 7) note that a specific approach used in supervision is “the medium through which the common factors work”.

Solution-focused supervision is a language-centred approach to supervision (Thomas, 2013) based on the solution-focused stance and using methods from a solution-focused approach. Solution-focused supervision aligns with and is, according to Thomas (2013), comparable with most of the principles of supervision influenced by ideas from postmodernism (Ungar, 2006) as described in the literature with a focus on the supervisor’s role. This author describes six essential supervisor roles, and he emphasises that the roles are closely connected and can appear interchangeable. Firstly, being the supervisee’s supporter, supporting with emotional hurdles from,

and beyond, work and supporting with an exploration of the counselling experiences on a personal level. Secondly, a supervisor supporting the counsellor to be the best possible practitioner focussing on the counsellor's professional talents and abilities. Thirdly, a case consultant, focussing on the client and offering advice and sharing counselling experience and expertise. Fourthly, a trainer or a teacher, offering instructions, focus on techniques, and interventions, and sharing experience from the counselling field practice. Fifthly, a colleague sharing responsibility and working collaboratively together with the counsellor to offer the client the best possible help. Finally, a supervisor described as an advocate for both the counsellor and the client (Ungar, 2006). Four of these mentioned supervisor roles are described by Thomas (2013) as essential to solution-focused supervision; the role as supporter, supervisor, case consultant, and colleague.

Thomas (1994, p. 12) writes that he sees an “isomorphic relationship” between SFBT and solution-focused supervision, each corresponding with the other and playing similar roles. He recommends adopting the same underlying assumptions and core techniques used in solution-focused counselling in a solution-focused model of supervision. A supervision approach for counsellor educators described by Juhnke (1996) is based on solution-focused counselling and includes techniques focussing on pre-session changes, goal setting, and exceptions. Solution-focused supervision is only one of many possible ways of working with supervision, but Thomas (2013), a significant contributor to newer literature about solution-focused supervision, emphasises that solution-focused supervision is a time-tested instrument to endorse strengths and resources. He describes solution-focused supervision as a collaborative working alliance between supervisor and supervisee; a supervisory relationship that builds on the assumptions from a solution-focused way of thinking and inspires the development and maintenance of skills and competencies (Thomas, 1994, 2013).

A major contributor to the development of solution-focused supervision is Berg, who is not only one of the creators of SFBT but, who also evolved solution-focused supervision as part of her practice and extensive teaching of other practitioners (Thomas, 2013). Berg saw supervision as a lifelong practice, and one of her most recognised ideas from SFBT was also a guiding principle in her view on supervision: “When you lead from one step behind, then the therapist takes responsibility for his or her own learning” (Thomas, 2013, p. 62).

Solution-focused supervision is parallel to the therapeutic practice of SFBT in paying particular attention to the counsellor’s intention, hopes and goals for their work (Waskett, 2006). In solution-focused supervision, there is a particular focus on setting a specific goal to be able to create a picture of the supervisee’s preferred future as a counsellor (Thomas, 2013).

As it is in solution-focused counselling, the starting position in solution-focused supervision is that the supervisee is the expert and already has the strengths and resources (Knight, 2004; Thomas, 1994, 2013) that are needed. Thomas (2013) summarises a list of qualities and characteristics that exemplify solution-focused supervision: the importance of exceptions, a focus towards the future, solutions are not necessarily connected to the problem, the fluidity of language, and an emphasis on pragmatism. Solution-focused supervision has been described as a process of “widening the lens” (Lowe & Guy, 2002, p. 146) and a way of working with supervision that clarifies hope, appreciates existing competence, and change that has already happened, identifying resources, supporting ideas and new perspectives, talking about future possibilities, and the collaborative reflection on the counseling session (Lowe & Guy, 2002).

The focus of a solution-focused approach in both counselling and supervision is on what is happening in-between counselling sessions or supervision sessions and sometimes before the first session; the so-called ‘pre-session change’ (O’Connell, 1998). This is parallel to a counsellor deciding what to bring to and how to prepare for a supervision session and the pre-supervision

session change and learning are given the same focus as in a solution-focused counselling session. It might expand the counsellor's learning because the initial learning is already achieved and by using that as a stepping-stone it might produce the possibility to reach even further (Durrant, 2017).

Literature has described how the supervisor in solution-focused supervision is changing from being an expert to working more as a consultant or a cooperative colleague focusing on encouragement and validation (Campbell, 2000; Pichot, 2005; Thomas, 1994). The three classic definitions of the *super* in supervision: *above*, *beside* and *beyond* has been analysed in a solution-focused context and where a conventional view of supervision emphasises the view from *above*, the solution-focused supervisor observes *beside* the supervisee and invites the supervisee to look *beyond* what she already knows and to focus on change and possibilities (Lowe & Guy, 2002, p. 144).

The most important solution-focused supervision process methods introduced by Berg in 2003 and noted by Thomas (2013, p. 64) were: to encourage, to empathise, to use compliments, to explore exceptions, to ask scaling questions, to ask relationship questions, to stay pragmatic, to be supportive and challenging, and to build a collaborative supervisory relationship.

Solution-focused supervision has also been suggested to involve these four parts: "(1) establishing an atmosphere of competence, (2) a search for client based solutions, (3) feed-back to the supervisee, and (4) follow-up supervision." (Triantafillou, 1997, p. 311). Those practical guidelines of how to implement solution-focused supervision were created based on learning from his explorative study on client outcome, and Triantafillou (1997) describes a focus on the counsellor's strengths and successes rather than the mistakes and failures, and he recommends a strong focus on the client outcome. He describes how the solution-focused supervisor uses compliments in his feedback to the supervisee and how a focus on the counsellor's supervisory goals initiates reflections and supports the supervisee to work effectively with client-focused

solutions. The ‘follow-up supervision’ is building on the principles from SFBT focussing on positive changes between supervision sessions (Triantafillou, 1997).

A description of solution-focused supervision used in training of counsellor students has shown that client-centred solution-focused questions could support their practice and learning (Trenhaile, 2005). A counsellor who is aware of her strengths, resources, and limitations is more likely to work competently based on the professional codes of ethics and practice (O'Connell, 1998). It has been noted that solution-focused supervision might support a counsellor to build a strong professional identity (O'Connell, 1998) building on the competencies and resources which the supervisee already possesses and regarding her fundamentally skilled.

The review of SFBT literature performed by Franklin et al. (2017) also indicates that solution-focused supervision should focus on the language skills to be able to co-construct conversations with clients and the process of co-construction in order to increase counselling competencies.

Research on Solution-focused Supervision

Most research-based literature about solution-focused supervision argues for the benefits of the approach and highlights the advantages of the method (Briggs & Miller, 2005; Grant, 2012; Koob, 2003; Presbury, Echterling, & McKee, 1999; Waskett, 2006; Wetchler, 1990).

A pilot study of the impact of solution-focused supervision on client outcome has shown that client outcome can improve significantly. Compared to a control group, in the intervention group, serious client incidents had decreased 65,5 % while the level of decrease in the control group was 10% (Triantafillou, 1997). This study was conducted in a children's mental health setting and is considered to be a well-designed study that is pioneering in the field of solution-focused supervision research (Durrant, 2017; Thomas, 2013).

Some research has found that solution-focused supervision can foster a higher level of self-efficacy and a higher level of confidence and competence among supervisees (Briggs & Miller, 2005; Koob, 2003). Research has shown that solution-focused supervision can be an approach to supervision that may both increase and maintain counsellor skills and can be a useful means to support counsellors to remain in the profession longer, and thereby create career stability in the counselling profession (Koob, 2003).

Solution-focused supervision has been described as helpful for counsellors because of the empowering element, and can be professionally beneficial by emphasising the focus on the successes—what is done well—and the attention to strengths and skills happening when the supervisor changes their role as an expert to working more as a consultant or a cooperative colleague, and focusing on encouragement and validation (Campbell, 2000). The supervisee's experience of being empowered has also been described as one of the most critical effects of solution-focused supervision as it clarifies alternatives, prompts other ideas and opinions and praises the counsellor's strengths, and thereby leads to the experience of empowerment (Juhnke, 1996). Modelling a solution-focused skill, or a different possible intervention can support the supervisee's experience of being effective (Juhnke, 1996). Research has highlighted that supervisors need to be tentative about their own bias and knowledge as well as being curious about the bias and knowledge of the supervisee and thereby invite a collaborative relationship, which assists the stance of not-knowing in a solution-focused approach (Hair & Fine, 2012).

Solution-focused supervision has been shown to be effective supervision for counsellors because of a possibility of adopting experience of success from a prior career into the practice as a counsellor and thereby it is suggested that solution-focused supervision may be a contributing factor in producing highly skilled therapists (Koob, 2003).

Research has proposed that solution-focused supervision has potential to be used in a broader range of supervision contexts, not only within a solution-focused isomorphism, where both supervisee and supervisor work from a solution-focused approach. A solution-focused supervisor can enhance a counsellor's practice regardless of her theoretical orientation (Knight, 2004; Thomas, 1994). As Briggs and Miller (2005, p. 219) noted, "This constructive approach, regardless of the methods used by the therapist, will foster greater perceived self-efficacy and, accordingly, greater confidence and competence amongst therapists we supervise".

Koob (2003) recommends more studies that determine if solution-focused supervision may guide counsellors to experience more satisfaction with the profession be undertaken. He suggests a focus on the beneficial mechanisms of solution-focused supervision and the components that make it work (Koob, 2003). Shurts (2015) also calls for more research of solution-focused supervision. He writes that even though solution-focused supervision has been accepted and practised for years, the field needs more research into the ways in which it is useful. Those recommendations for further research on solution-focused supervision combined with a gap in research literature involving experienced practitioners are key elements which have informed my research and have initiated my determination to examine how experienced counsellors find their needs for clinical supervision are met by participating in solution-focused supervision.

Definition of solution-focused supervision for the purpose of this thesis.

There does not seem to be a "fully agreed crisp definition" of solution-focused practice (McKergow, 2016 p. 31) and I have found it useful to define how I understand solution-focused supervision for the purpose of this thesis. My definition is based on the above-mentioned literature about supervision and solution-focused practice.

Solution-focused supervision is clinical supervision where the supervisor works from a solution-focused approach. It is a pragmatic and inductive way of supervision that a counsellor and a supervisor do together, based on the counsellor's reality and way of seeing the world as the core perspective and shaping a collaborative conversation. Solution-focused supervision focusses on what the counsellor wants to change and has distinct attention to the supervisee's goals and preferred future. It is grounded in the core solution-focused assumptions and uses solution-focused techniques similar to SFBT, and the supervisor functions as a consultant more than an expert. Solution-focused supervision focuses on what already works and how to consciously do more of that as a practitioner. Like other kinds of clinical supervision, solution-focused supervision is expected to contribute to safe practice, the improvement of professional competence, continued development and professional growth, self-awareness, and reflexivity (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Pelling et al., 2009).

Like counsellors, supervisors often use an integrated approach to their work by incorporating aspects of several approaches in their practice (Jones-Smith, 2016). I did not interview participants' supervisors when collecting data for this study, so it is unknown to what extent they would define themselves as solution-focused supervisors. I base my assumption of them being solution-focused supervisors on the descriptions the participants of the study give of the supervisory work and relationship. Some of my participants describe their supervisor's work as "pure" solution-focused—meaning they use an exclusively solution-focused approach in the work—and others describe their supervisor working from an integrated approach with solution-focused being a substantial aspect.

Chapter 3 - Epistemology, Methodology, Method and Research Design

Researcher's Worldview and Epistemology

My worldview and core values are undoubtedly profoundly shaped by living most of my life in Denmark, giving me professional values of respecting the merit of the individual, professional integrity, accountability, compassion and commitment. Denmark is an old country, with a long history, a comprehensive social welfare system, a homogeneous population, and a high level of social and economic equality that is coupled with a social modesty code. A comparative social study (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002) shows that the values of Danes are oriented toward family, nature, social justice, and equality. Given the influence of this culture, it seems natural that I consider the most critical elements of counselling practice to be communication and a collaborative relationship based on equality and empathy.

As I was preparing for this research of how solution-focused supervision meets the needs for clinical supervision from the experienced counsellor's point of view, and having to find the best way to find the answer to that question, I thought more deeply on my background and I realised how much I had been influenced by the Danish theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (Garff & Kirmmse, 2005; Thielst, 2013). I see much connection between Kierkegaard's philosophy and counselling practice (Dopson & Gade, 1981; Shurts, 2015; Strickland, 1966). Some of the distinctive correlations to counselling practice, in general, and to a solution-focused approach, in particular, are the effect of allowing a client or a supervisee to talk and be listened to without judgement and without being given advice (Fernando, 2007), focus on a potential self, the efficiency of self-directed inventories, and a sense of inner responsibility, which Kierkegaard calls 'sovereignty over the self' (Dopson & Gade, 1981). As described by Dopson and Gade (1981) and Strickland (1966), Kierkegaard was intensely preoccupied with the thought that a person growing and developing has an examined and validated goal which will direct choices and behaviour but

also requires a willingness to actively participate. Kierkegaard said, “Instruction begins when you the teacher, learn from the learner” (Kierkegaard, Lowrie, & Nelson, 1962). This is significant to me because it correlates with both my personal and my professional values of emphasising a right to autonomy. He also states that the helper has to be humble and try to understand what and how the learner or client understands, noting that: “this is the secret to the art of helping others” (Kierkegaard et al., 1962), which as stated earlier in this section matches my cultural background. These components from Kierkegaard’s thinking are relevant for this study because they are correlative to a solution-focused approach to supervision that focuses on the supervisee’s preferred future, letting her stay the expert in her own life and the idea of leading from behind. Kierkegaard also has a unique view on anxiety [*angest*], which he sees as a fundamental and necessary element in any human growth, but must be seen closely related to creativity and thus connected to possibilities and change (Kierkegaard et al., 1962). Kierkegaard talks about the virtue of honesty, requiring patience, perseverance, hope and faith strengthened by other virtues such as gentleness and compassion (Roberts, 1995). In my worldview, this correlates perfectly with a solution-focused approach to supervision, and in this, I share the ideas of Fernando (2007) when she states that working from an existential perspective using SFBT supports clients to identify and act on their best ways to cope.

Both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, a significant inspiration for the original thoughts behind the solution-focused approach, have a distinct focus on the importance of language and on using everyday words that need not be paraphrased or improved (Roberts, 1995), and this correlates to a solution-focused stance of using the client’s words. It is also one of my professional values and principles. There is a significant correlation between social constructionism and the solution-focused stance, especially in attention upon language and the importance of the role language has in our thinking, where language is considered a pre-condition for thoughts and social interaction, and

common answers are found in the interactive processes between people (Burr, 1995; Shurts, 2015). Language is an essential part of social processes and of the interactions in which people engage with each other (Burr, 1995; Hair & Fine, 2012), and might be even more significant in a counselling and supervision setting as a language-based and socially constructed practice (Neimeyer, 1998).

Because I live, work, and study in a country with a language second to my native language, I am especially conscious of being aware of the influence of language in any kind of communication. As a trainee counsellor, I have been challenged by unfamiliarity with subtle meanings of some words that are embedded in the culture of New Zealand. This element has been studied by Georgiadou (2014), and she states that her study “indicates that linguistic proficiency is not merely a ‘linguistic’ matter, but an area influenced by familiarity with the host culture” (Georgiadou, 2014, p. 16). The cultural differences give me an advantage as a researcher to be the naïve inquirer, to work from the not-knowing stance, and to explore this research phenomenon with open eyes and a genuinely curious mind. I have a deep respect for different ways of seeing and understanding the world, and I believe that our cultural and historical background determine our understanding and that all understandings are equally valid, coherent with the stance from social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Hair & Fine, 2012; Neimeyer, 1998).

It is consistent with my cultural, professional, and linguistic background that I have chosen a qualitative research approach that explores how my participants subjectively experience their solution-focused supervision. In addition, I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews based on a solution-focused approach to frame the possibility for the participants to bring in what they found important and relevant. I will elaborate on the nature of the interviews in the method section. First, I turn to the methodology underpinning this research.

Methodological Frame

The epistemological stance of this study is grounded in social constructionism with an intention to capture how the participating experienced counsellors see and experience solution-focused supervision as their choice of clinical supervision. The fundamental values from social constructionism represent the theoretical basis, primarily that knowledge is sustained by social processes and that people construct their way of understanding in social interaction (Burr, 1995). From a social constructionist perspective knowledge is never objective but rather it is the result of social and subjective communication (Neimeyer, 1998), and in both a counselling setting and research setting it is important to recognise that personal and social values have a significant influence (Guterman & Rudes, 2008).

I have considered which methodology would be best suited to answer my research question as recommended by Knox and Burkard (2009). A quantitative methodology could have been used and is a common research methodology in counselling research. Quantitative research often employs surveys or experiments and aims to summarise the data into categories that can be counted (Hanley, Lennie, & West, 2013). Lennie and West (2010, p. 83) suggest that “the phenomenon under investigation drives the method that we chose”. This is why I have chosen to use a qualitative research methodology that aims to develop an understanding of how solution-focused supervision is useful and makes it possible to collect rich information from supervision practice. Qualitative research is an observation on the real world while trying to make sense of it and to interpret the experiences in the way it is understood by the people participating in it (Brinkmann, 2012). It aims to make the world visible and is performed by a researcher who, as Brinkmann (2012) notes, is transparently informed by her worldview and background and aims to perceive and clarify the participant’s way of understanding the world, and uncover potential patterns in this understanding and the context in which it is happening. It is often explorative and requires an open-minded

approach (Brinkmann, 2012). Qualitative research can produce a detailed and practice-based description (Tolich & Davidson, 1998) which is why I have found it the most appropriate methodology to answer my research question.

This qualitative study is not free of values or bias and, to secure integrity and trustworthiness, I have prioritised a high level of transparency when describing the processes and my involvement as the researcher. In this way my involvement in the study becomes a source of data, a factor Bogdan and Biklen (2007) consider both important and useful. For the purpose of this study I have used trustworthiness to meet the research criteria of validity and credibility and, as such, give attention to the close relationship of the findings to, and influence of, my values, experiences and cultural background. Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton (2001) have discussed the issues of trustworthiness and suggested such qualitative research is presented “without the author(s) claiming to know better than the participants what the participants really thought and meant” (Harrison et al., 2001, p. 325). At the beginning of the research process, exploring research and literature and writing on my first drafts of the proposal, I had ideas of using a reciprocal or verification element to increase the level of trustworthiness. I considered a focus group of the participants whose aim was to consider my analysis and interpretation of the data. In my research journal, I reflected on and processed a decision on not to use this because of my concern about whether a focus group might stop potential participants from responding, partly because of the required time and partly because of the breach of privacy as a participant, making it difficult for me to recruit sufficient participants. I was also concerned about being restrained to interviewing locally based counsellors to make the focus group practically possible. I also considered using the local Solution-Focused Interest Group as a peer debriefing for the purpose of exploring aspects of bias, aspects that might be implicit within my analysis and interpretation, and to propose alternative possible interpretations. Taking into consideration the ethical need for protecting the participants'

privacy, balancing the relatively few experienced counsellors and in particular solution-focused supervisors in New Zealand, I decided not to use this group for this purpose. Since ethical considerations around confidentiality became noticeable later in the analysis process, as described in the method section, this probably would not have been possible to complete.

The findings in this study originate from semi-structured interviews, and I am aware of the importance of the language that I choose to use in those interviews and how I asked the questions. This means that my choices about what to ask the participants, and perhaps even more, the socially constructed relationship between me and the interviewees, both influenced the participants' responses and the way I heard and understood the participants' statements, and subsequently influenced my interpretation of the findings and thereby the results of this study. Burr (1995) notes that the interpretation and meaning of the research findings are created in a social process and will, therefore, be a product of the interaction between the researcher and the interviewed participants.

It is not only the method of collection of research materials that was subject to potential bias but also the analysis and interpretive approach. With awareness of the fact that my way of seeing the world guided the way I understood the findings, I approached the analysis and interpretation of the findings from an interpretative paradigm based on the presumption that reality always is socially constructed. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was selected as the fundamental method to identify themes in the collected data and to support my interpretation of participants' experiences and reflections on aspects of solution-focused supervision. I wanted the data from the interviews to be the source of the analysis, and themes to come directly from the data, hence why thematic analysis was chosen (Muir-Cochrane & Fereday, 2006). This is a point to which I return when I describe the analysis process in a later section.

Method

Reflexivity.

As a trainee counsellor, journals have been an integrated part of my professional reflective practice, and it has become part of my research process to use a reflective research journal. In the journal, I have noted not only the process of the research project, but I have also described my choices, decisions and the emerging obstacles during the thesis process. I have returned to the reflective journal, reading it several times, especially during the phases of analysing and interpreting the data and during the writing process, to secure integration of context and to be aware of my influence on the understanding of the material as the researcher. The value of this is a point that Grafanaki (1996) and Lennie and West (2010) each make. I have provided as much transparency about the research process as possible, and the reflective research journal has been a crucial element in making that possible by first making it visible for myself as recommended by Ortlipp (2008). Writing the research journal has also helped me to be aware of my internal responses to being a researcher (Etherington, 2004) and how that has influenced this study.

I have incorporated learning from my ongoing reflective practice based on participating in solution-focused supervision as a trainee counsellor in the writing of this thesis. Given that I made the methodological choice of not using a focus group, peer debriefing, or other supporting analysis and interpretation methods, I have been aware of the importance of incorporating my reflexivity to maintain trustworthiness. In the main, the collected reflexive material has been used to assist the interpretation of the data and to select the chosen themes in the findings, and my own experience of and learning from solution-focused supervision additionally inform the latter discussion of the findings.

To supplement my knowledge and understanding of solution-focused supervision, I have participated in a two-day training seminar in August 2017 run by Compass Seminars New Zealand

and facilitated by Michael Durrant (Appendix A). This course significantly enhanced and elaborated my knowledge about the structure and techniques used in solution-focused supervision, but above all, it gave me a personal experience of the essence and depth of solution-focused supervision seen from the supervisor's perspective.

Recruitment and selection of participants.

This study included participants with extensive experience as counsellors. The participants' counselling modality was not a factor in recruitment, but they all use a solution-focused approach to some extent. The primary factor for recruitment was at least ten years of counselling practice and a current engagement in supervision substantially based on a solution-focused approach; where the solution-focused assumptions and core beliefs are a significant aspect of the supervisor's practice. The study has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury, (Appendix B – Human Ethics Committee Approval). An information sheet (Appendix C - Information Sheet) and consent form (Appendix D - Consent Form) informed the participants about the frame and intention of this study. In the interviews, I asked for questions and comments to the information given and the content and substance of their consent. The participants were offered to read the transcript of the interview before my analysis process began; none of the participants chose to do so. The participants confirmed their level of experience in counselling practice on the consent form.

Participants were recruited via six different means to secure that the invitation to participate in the research was received by the potential participants because of the suspected limited number of experienced counsellors with involvement in solution-focused supervision. First, an e-mail was sent to local solution-focused supervisors asking if they would be willing to disseminate the invitation among their supervisees and, if relevant, in a potential newsletter. The list of emails was

obtained from my own exploration of potential solution-focused supervisors for my practicum placement period as a trainee counsellor and from recommendations of peer students and colleagues. Participants were also invited by other means: a post on a Facebook group of solution-focused practitioners, information disseminated to the participants of the Second Solution-Focused New Zealand Conference in Christchurch in March 2017, and information emailed to the members of the Solution-Focused Interest Group in Christchurch, and to regional members of New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC). The latter email lists were obtained through contact with coordinators and administrators. I was also permitted, by the event organisers, to display my invitation to the participants of the solution-focused supervision course. The invitations to the solution-focused supervisors and to the experienced counsellors are attached as Appendix E - Invitation to Participants.

Twelve counselling practitioners responded positively to my invitation to participate in this study. Two were counsellors who had more than ten years of experience, but their supervision was according to their information not based on a solution-focused approach. The remaining ten respondents informed me that they participated in solution-focused supervision; one was practising as a social worker with ten years of experience; three were practising counsellors, but with practice experience between four and eight years. Those respondents were not chosen to participate. Six counsellors with more than ten years of practice and informing that they currently were engaged in solution-focused supervision were chosen to participate in this study because they met both the criteria of level of experience and had regular solution-focused supervision. The participants were four female and two male counsellors; three working as high school guidance counsellors, one in a government agency, one in a community health agency and one in private practice. Their years of practice experience as counsellors were 14, 18, 20, 21, 26, and 32 years. Five of the counsellors have degrees in counselling, and one is a Counselling Psychologist. No specific data about

individual participant ages, ethnicity, or education is included because, given the relatively small number of practitioners engaged in solution-focused practice in New Zealand, that information would risk exposing the identity of the participants, but they represent a broad age range and a diversity of ethnicities and cultures.

Two of the practitioners described that they used a solution-focused approach exclusively in their work, while four took an integrated approach that incorporated a solution-focused approach. The participants described that their supervisors included two using solution-focused methods exclusively in their supervision practice, and four supervisors who worked with a solution-focused approach as a substantial aspect in their integrated approach or as one of the participants worded it, could “*comfortably slot into the solution-focused*”. None of the participants had the same supervisor as another participant. The participants have had their current supervisor between 4 and 18 years. I did not collect detailed information about the supervisors, but five of the supervisors were either mentioned by name by the participant or due to information given unintentionally they were easily identified by me, as the researcher, during the interviews. I address the ethical implications of this later in this chapter.

Of the six participants, there were three I had not previously met, though one was familiar to me through solution-focused practitioner network activity. I knew three of the participants: one from a job interview, one from a short-term work contact, and one as a peer participant at the solution-focused supervision course.

Semi-structured interviews.

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide (Appendix F – The Interview Guide) and performed with an open mind and a focus on what works, true to a solution-focused stance. This interview approach was chosen to enhance the possibility of

gathering detailed and descriptive data (Knox & Burkard, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016) and allowing the participants to contribute what they found important and significant in their reflection on their experience of solution-focused supervision. A solution-focused approach used in the interviews grew from an intention to work with an open and flexible approach and was informed by Gubrium (2012) who suggests employing an interactional and reflexive dimension in research interviews:

The shaky ground, the loose gravel, the cracked world of interviewing is much more of a blessing than a curse. These cracks open up the established protocol of interviews as dictated by postmodern “interview society”. And through the cracks we see light and shadows that we never anticipated. This should provide all of us with enough motivation to continue to explore the world(s) around us (Gubrium, 2012, p. 20).

I was also informed by Anderson (2005, p. 503) who writes that “not-knowing involves respectful listening, listening in an active and responsive way”. She explains that it means listening in a way that shows the person interviewed saying something worth hearing, writing that “having an authentic commitment to being open to the other person’s story is critical to dialogue” (Anderson, 2005, p. 503). Chang (2010) introduces hermeneutic inquiry as an approach to research that is consistent with the philosophy and worldview of a solution-focused approach. “I found that the style of interviewing I use in therapy was easily transferable to hermeneutic inquiry” (Chang, 2010, p. 25). He positioned himself in his research in a “not knowing” position:

Not knowing, in the context of a research interview, does not mean that the interviewer knows nothing of the phenomenon under study, but that he or she is aware of his or her understanding, and permits the participant’s account to emerge, allowing for a fusion of horizons (Chang, 2010, p. 26).

A solution-focused approach used in the interviews was a familiar language for the participants both from their own practice and from their solution-focused supervision, and also was a common language between myself and the participants, due to my practice as a solution-focused trainee counsellor and them all being solution-focused practitioners to some extent. Thus, the interviews became more of a conversation between two equals and a social interaction between the participants and myself rather than a question-and-answer interview exchange. Thus, the content of the interviews was co-constructed inside this social interaction. My chosen interview approach influenced the data gathering which thus became more open and less structured but also contained the advantage of giving the participants the main voice and enhanced their engagement in the interviews.

The interview guide.

The interview guide was developed through reflections on my research question, informed by literature about clinical supervision and solution-focused supervision, and my preferred areas of focus. My main aim in the interviews was to gather as detailed information about the participants' experience of their solution-focused supervision as possible and my questions were guided by a focus on relating their experiences to their needs for supervision and also on exploring if there were limitations to a solution-focused approach used in supervision.

I decided to group the interview guide into two parts. The first part had a focus on a recent solution-focused supervision session with the main purpose to gather details about how solution-focused supervision was used and worked for my participants. This part also intended to collect data about ways the participants experienced solution-focused supervision supporting their learning and growth:

In what ways was your recent solution-focused supervision session useful for you?

What did you notice that was particularly helpful for you? What else?

What question asked by your supervisor was especially influential? In what ways did that question start a conversation that initiated leaning?

The second part of the interview guide focused on the long-term experience of solution-focused supervision. I started this part of the interview asking about their best hopes for solution-focused supervision. This particular part of the interviews helped me, through an analysis process, to define the needs for clinical supervision, as it is used in this thesis, which I return to at the beginning of the findings chapter.

What are your best hopes from your solution-focused supervision?

I also wanted to explore how solution-focused supervision influenced the participants' counselling practice and client work and the interview guide contained following questions which I asked to explore those elements. These questions also explored how solution-focused supervision might support them as counsellors when they needed support in their counselling practice:

When solution-focused supervision has been useful for you and your work with your clients, what do you notice happens in the counselling sessions? What else? How do you know?

What do you do differently in your professional work as a counsellor based on your solution-focused supervision?

In what ways do your solution-focused supervision fulfil your needs for support when you come across complications, are in trouble, or run short of options? How do you know?

What difference does that make for you as a practitioner?

I wanted to explore how solution-focused supervision might be connected to the participants' professional development:

How do you see the role of supervision in terms of professional development compared to other types of professional development?

I wanted to incorporate a critical view on whether a solution-focused approach used in counselling supervision could have limitations or weaknesses and in what way it might be possible to compensate for those:

If you have any worries about solution-focused supervision, what would that be? How have you (and your supervisor) managed to compensate for that?

I used the interview guide as a framework, and the participants were invited to contribute what else they thought was important about their solution-focused supervision. Due to the open-ended nature and the chosen solution-focused stance, few of the questions I asked in the interviews across all participants were entirely similar. The interviews all had a distinctive individual character depending on the interviewee's personality and the relationship that developed between me and the interviewee. Some of the participants were more or less self-reflecting in and out of the topics moderately guided by my questions, and others were more genuinely guided by the questions from the interview guide.

The interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 38 and 106 minutes. Two were conducted at the participants' workplace, one in the participant's home, one in a neutral office, and two by Skype. The choice of location for the interviews was based on what was most convenient for the interviewee and with concerns to the geographical distance between me and the interviewee. The location of the interviews seemed to influence the content and length of the interviews. The

shortest and most structured interviews were at the interviewee's workplace influenced by the restricted timeframe and the longest interview was conducted in the interviewee's home with a more informal setting and also with more time spent on building rapport.

Even though I intended to be a naïve inquirer, my research journal contained several reflections on my relationship with the interviewees as shown in this excerpt from my notes made just after one of the interviews: *"I really liked interviewing [this participant], she was so experienced, so well-spoken and she said so many interesting and important things that I can use."* In my research journal reflecting on the experience and the mentioned note, I realised how I had already started the analysis process: *"Her way of describing the relationship with her supervisor was very similar to the description made by [former interviewee] and [former interviewee]. I wonder if more of my interviewees might mention something similar"*. This reflection increased my awareness that I had to pay attention to whether I was listening for something particular (similar) and whether that might influence the way I asked my questions and interacted with the interviewee. In my preparation for the next interview, I wrote: *"Take care that you do not lead [this participant] in your questioning because you hope for a similar answer."*

Data gathering and analysis method.

The data was collected from six audio recorded semi-structured interviews. To secure richness and sufficient depth in the data gathering, I had ensured various data sources by supplementing the interviews with a description of the context and researcher's comments, as suggested by Morrow (2005), formed by both handwritten notes during the interviews and reflective notes written just after the interviews which included notes about body language, for example use of hands and arms to support a statement, and changes in body position. I transcribed the interviews myself so that I could note my reflections on the social interaction and relationship between me and

the interviewed participant as recommended by Knox and Burkard (2009) and Roulston (2014), and to support my understanding of the context in which the words were said, and to enhance the validity of my interpretation as recommended by Jenks (2011), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Lennie and West (2010). Apart from transcribing what was said, I also noted other verbal and non-verbal cues, including intonation, and pauses. This included laughter, um, uhs, and other similar utterances, and repetitions of words. Another reason for transcribing the interviews myself was, as Jacobsen (2007) and Jenks (2011) suggest, to begin the process of analysis while transcribing.

Thematic analysis.

I chose thematic analysis because, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Muir-Cochrane and Fereday (2006), it is a method that can help make meaning of the data and to manage the volume and complexity of the dataset without losing the context. I chose thematic analysis to be able to capture what was said in the interviews, identify patterns, and support the interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). An inductive approach, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was chosen because of my intention to explore the participants' experience of solution-focused supervision. The analysis was driven by the data collected in the interviews and an open approach without preconceptions as to what themes I could identify from the data. I was aware that my interpretations of what was interesting and important were shaped by my worldview, the selected methodology, and by the overarching research question.

I used the thematic analysis to explore for themes that described something important to answer my research question, and at the same time exemplified a pattern in the participants' answers and statements. I had a special awareness of when a commonness emerged from the data and also when the participants had different viewpoints, with the purpose of ensuring a truthful description of their views. I intended to present the findings and represent the participants as

truthfully as possible as it has been recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis was done in phases using four of the six phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarising myself with the data, (2) producing initial themes, (3) searching for and defining themes based on a decision of what was most significant and provided answers to the research question, and (4) selecting essential extracts from the data to produce the report of the analysis. The analysis process is thoroughly described in a subsequent section.

Mind maps used as a tool in the thematic analysis.

Mind maps can graphically organise a large number of items around a central topic and link connections to help organise data visually (Wheeldon & Åhlberg, 2012). I used mind maps to complete the thematic analysis phases, helping me to organise, structure, and systematise the collected data and to find the categories and themes. A mind map is a diagram that can be used to organise information visually and within a hierarchy and it can show the relationship between the topics on the branches; here it was used not only as an organisational tool but also, as Buzan and Buzan (2000) suggest, as an analytic tool. Mind maps were initially drawn by hand, but in this study, the software from iMindmap was used (Buzan & Buzan, 2000; iMindmap, 2017; Wheeldon & Åhlberg, 2012; Whiting & Sines, 2012).

My data was first constructed in one mind map for each interview and then re-read and re-analysed until a sufficient level of deep understanding was accomplished. During the analysis process, the data were combined into themes that could be presented as findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Taylor et al., 2016). The mind maps made the data easily traceable throughout the analysing process because the data were coded in colours relating to each participant. The data included precise time information about where in the interview it was said, which made it easy for me, in the analysis process, to return and hear the statement again and

thereby became a validating mechanism for the collected data (Buzan & Buzan, 2000; Wheeldon & Åhlberg, 2012; Whiting & Sines, 2012). The indication of time also made it easy to support my interpretation of the findings with comments made during the transcription and with the context of what else happened in the interview taken into consideration. The mind maps also made it possible to quickly move back and forth in the data set and support the depth of the thematic analysis as it is recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The analysis processes.

In the first phase of my analytical process of familiarising myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I transferred answers and statements from each of the six interviews to an initial mind map. In this phase, I started my interpretation of what was important and relevant regarding answering the research question. A variable amount of content in the interviews was a conversation to build a relationship between me as the researcher and the interviewee, which did not directly contain data to inform the research question. Those conversations were about the interviewee's work and clients, practice, experience of counselling supervision more generally, and described the participant's worldview and values and it all provided a substantial base to support my interpretation of the data. This part of the data was used in the analysis to assist my reflections on how to understand and interpret the data material. The data was put in these first mind maps without any prior systematic frame and subsequently sorted into the topics that seemed to describe and explain the data in that initial mind map. At the end of this stage of the analysis process, I had six mind maps with data that were very differently organised and individually patterned.

In the second phase of the analysis process, I re-read the initial mind maps and reflected on if it were possible to perceive some potential groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which the data from the interviews had in common. From this, I developed nine initial themes that seemed to include all

of the selected data from the six interviews. These initial themes were: best hopes from participating in solution-focused supervision, relationship to professional development, the role of supervision, the content of supervision, choice of supervisor, relationship to supervisor, view of supervisor, use of a solution-focused approach, and critique of a solution-focused approach used in supervision.

The third phase of my analysis was to define and name the central themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) based on the tentative mind maps with nine initial themes. I identified four central themes, several related categories, and associated sub-categories, which I found described the dataset and provided a good basis to interpret the findings. The four themes were: A solution-focused approach used in supervision, the supervisory relationship, the role of supervision, and the content of supervision. The last phase of the analysis was to select the essential and representative excerpts (Braun & Clarke, 2006) from the data to illustrate and support my analysis and interpretation of the findings. The data were kept colour-coded throughout the analysis process to be able to identify data from each of the six participants.

To secure my constant awareness on my biases and the influence of my own experiences and understanding of the world, during the analysis and interpretation phase, I repeatedly consulted both my reflective notes during and after the interviews, my researcher's comments while transcribing and my reflective notes in the research journal. An example of this is recurrent notes made while transcribing the interviews paying attention to how my tone of voice in my questions and even in my "yeah" and "uhs" showed my special interest in a statement and thereby influenced the interview. In the research journal, I noted: *"I have to be aware of this phenomenon when I analyse and interpret the data, especially because I most likely, also in that phase, will have a special interest in that content."*

Ethical considerations.

In my reflective research journal, I noticed an increased awareness of critical ethical considerations that needed to be respected in my research. Both when I collected the data in the interviews, transcribed the interviews, and started the analysing process, I recognised that I had encountered data that would require a high level of ethical responsibility towards the openness and honesty that the participants had shown me in the interviews, a point that Brinkmann (2012) makes. A picture of data that could potentially make the participants recognisable to the readers became evident. Confidentiality in research indicates that private data which can identify the participants are not to be reported (Brinkmann, 2012) and I needed to consider a way to present the findings with trustworthiness without compromising the privacy of the participants and their supervisors.

First, the supervisors of the participants had not given consent to participate in this study, and therefore it was especially important to reflect on how to make sure that they were not recognised and identified by the readers of this study. Secondly, most of the participants in this study are distinguished and professionally active members of the counsellor community of New Zealand. Due to the limited size of the solution-focused counselling community of New Zealand and the subsequent prospect of the participants and the supervisors being easily recognised by readers of this study, some illustrative examples and explanations have not been quoted or used directly in the description of the findings to protect the participants' privacy. Some of those statements are important data that I used to support and strengthen the interpretation. For the same reason, some alterations have been made in the quoted statements to maintain ethical responsibility; for example, a mentioned name has been changed to "the supervisor", school has been changed to "workplace", and students or parents have been changed to "clients" and the participants and their supervisors are all described and mentioned as female. I am aware that the trustworthiness of the study could be degraded by altering statements, but the transparency and honesty about the moral

considerations and reflections show the weightiness I have given the ethical responsibility as the researcher of this study and as recommended by Brinkmann (2012).

To decrease the risk of revealing the identity of my participants, I have not been able to inform which of the participants said what; even though that would have supported both the trustworthiness and the understanding of my interpretations of the data. The ethical considerations have provided another research dilemma. I am aware that the participants are spending their precious time and providing me with valuable information and might wish to be credited for their statements and opinions.

Chapter 4 - Presentation of the Findings

This study intended to answer the question of how solution-focused supervision responds to the needs of experienced counsellors for clinical supervision. The findings are presented without reference to specific participants and without revealing specific information about the participants. As described in Chapter three, this approach has been chosen to secure privacy and to protect both the participants and their supervisors from being personally recognised. The excerpts that are directly quoted were selected with this consideration in mind. Where possible, the context of the findings are explained, and I note whether the finding represents all of the participants, some participants, or only one of the participants.

The findings are, when relevant, supplemented by my comments from the interview transcription, reflections from my research journal, and reflections from my own solution-focused supervision. This reflexivity is integrated into the presentation of the findings to obtain transparency in my interpretations and thereby enhance the trustworthiness as described in Chapter three.

To be able to answer the research question I needed to clarify how I, for the purpose of this study, defined the needs for supervision. I decided not only to build this definition on the aims and purposes described by research and literature but wanted to also integrate the way my participants understood their individual needs for supervision.

Best hopes from participating in solution-focused supervision.

To explore how the participants experienced their individually defined needs for clinical supervision, in the interviews, I asked for their best hopes from participating in solution-focused supervision. This question was asked to clarify the participants' supervision needs and resulted in very personal and detailed descriptions of how they saw their needs for supervision.

While the best hopes expressed by the participants illustrated their diverse and individually articulated ways of understanding their needs for supervision, the statements also clearly described a shared goal of being the best counsellor possible and their intent to ensure safe, ethical, and effective practice. This way of understanding their needs for supervision correlated well with the in literature described normative purpose of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Campbell, 2000; Watkins & Milne, 2014) and with the purpose of professional supervision for counsellors as outlined in the NZAC Code of Ethics, emphasising the reflection on and development of effective and ethical practice (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2016).

The participants described it this way:

To be the most effective practitioner I can be, I suppose.

To make a safe practitioner.

As effective as possible for the clients.

The participants also highlighted that their needs for clinical supervision were connected to their personal and professional learning and development. They described a need to encourage and support their professional development and to foster their learning and growth as a counsellor. Those goals for their supervision are closely related to the formative aim of supervision as described in the literature about supervision (Cassedy, 2010; Pelling et al., 2009).

A meeting of minds.

If I pick the main thing out it was probably to have another view on particular cases that will be the biggest thing.

To have a place where I can speak about myself as a professional/person in a holistic way.

To remind me to keep reflecting so as to keep me on track.

To problem solve in a collaborative way.

The participants emphasised the importance of the restorative element securing their wellbeing and supporting their self-awareness which is also described as essential elements in the literature about supervision (S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007) and supported by NZAC Code of Ethics describing that supervision includes personal support (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2016).

It is really nice to feel that there is somewhere I can go and talk confidentially about my private life and my workload and how that is impacting on me so I can feel that I am equipped, well equipped, to be doing my work and I guess that is the main.

To make sure that I am clear of my own issues and ethics and that I have somewhere I can talk about all of those things.

The most important thing is that I am not going to burn-out and that I am living a balanced life.

To vent frustrations and not be indulged in response to that venting.

In my reflective journal, during the interview process, I asked myself the same question as I asked the participants: “*What are your best hopes from participating in solution-focused supervision?*” My answer to that question was very similar the participants’ answers:

To become a better counsellor, to be able to help and support my clients in a way that is helpful for them, and to feel more confident in my use of the solution-focused approach.

In my analysis of the participants’ best hopes, I uncovered how the influence of a solution-focused approach was evident. The solution-focused assumptions, language and way of thinking were present in the participants’ descriptions of their goals for and expectations from supervision

using the word reminded, focussing on the client's preferred future, what was done well, and what to do more of and differently (Bliss & Bray, 2009).

My best hope would be that I from supervision can be in the best position possible to help and support the clients that I work with so they can get the best possible preferred future that they can get.

To remind me of what I do well and need to keep doing.

To identify what I can do more of and what I can do differently.

Definition of needs for supervision for the purpose of this thesis.

Based on the analysis of the expressed best hopes from the participants and informed by literature, for the purpose of this study, the definition of the needs of experienced counsellors for supervision is:

- to secure safe, ethical and effective professional counselling practice
- to foster learning, growth, and professional development
- to supply restorative support

Presentation of the findings.

I present the findings in central themes with the categories and subcategories developed from the analysis of the participant interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that repeated patterns of meaning suggest issues of interest, and in this study, four such themes emerged. This process of analysis has been described in Chapter three.

- A solution-focused approach used in supervision
- The supervisory relationship
- The role of solution-focused supervision

- The content of solution-focused supervision

Excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews are used to exemplify the themes and the categories. These are also presented as mind-maps created using the iMindmap software in the process of data analysis. The branches of the mind maps describe either a theme, a category, or a subcategory and the content are words or terms said by the participants in the interviews. The mind maps present the data in a visual manner, and the different shades of the branches support the visualisation of the different parts but have no distinct meaning. A total list of the mind maps is in Appendix G - List of Mind Maps.

The four central themes and their categories presented in the findings, emerging in response to the research question of how solution-focused supervision meets the clinical supervision needs of experienced counsellors, are:

Theme one: A solution-focused approach used in supervision

Categories

A: Effect of solution-focused questions

B: Solution-focused techniques

C: Sharing and celebrating successes

D: Reminded skills and resources

E: Validation and affirmation

F: Modelling the solution-focused stance

G: Takeaway from solution-focused supervision

H: Limitations

I: Compensate

Theme two: The supervisory relationship

Categories

A: Description

B: Longevity

C: Choice

D: Supporter

Theme three: The role of solution-focused supervision

Categories

A: Support

B: Sharing and being reminded

C: Emotional response

D: Safety

E: Good practice

E: Effect on clients and colleagues

F: Learning

Theme four: The content of solution-focused supervision

Categories

A: Combination of issues

B: Casework

C: Workplace and colleagues

D: Personal issues

E: Professional development

Theme One: A Solution-Focused Approach used in Supervision

To achieve a detailed and specific description of the ways a solution-focused approach was practised in the participants' supervision, I asked them to share what happened in their recent solution-focused supervision session and what had been particularly useful for them from that session. To give a more general picture in what way the solution-focused supervision was used and had influenced the participants in their counselling practice, I also encouraged them to describe what would typically happen in a solution-focused supervision session.

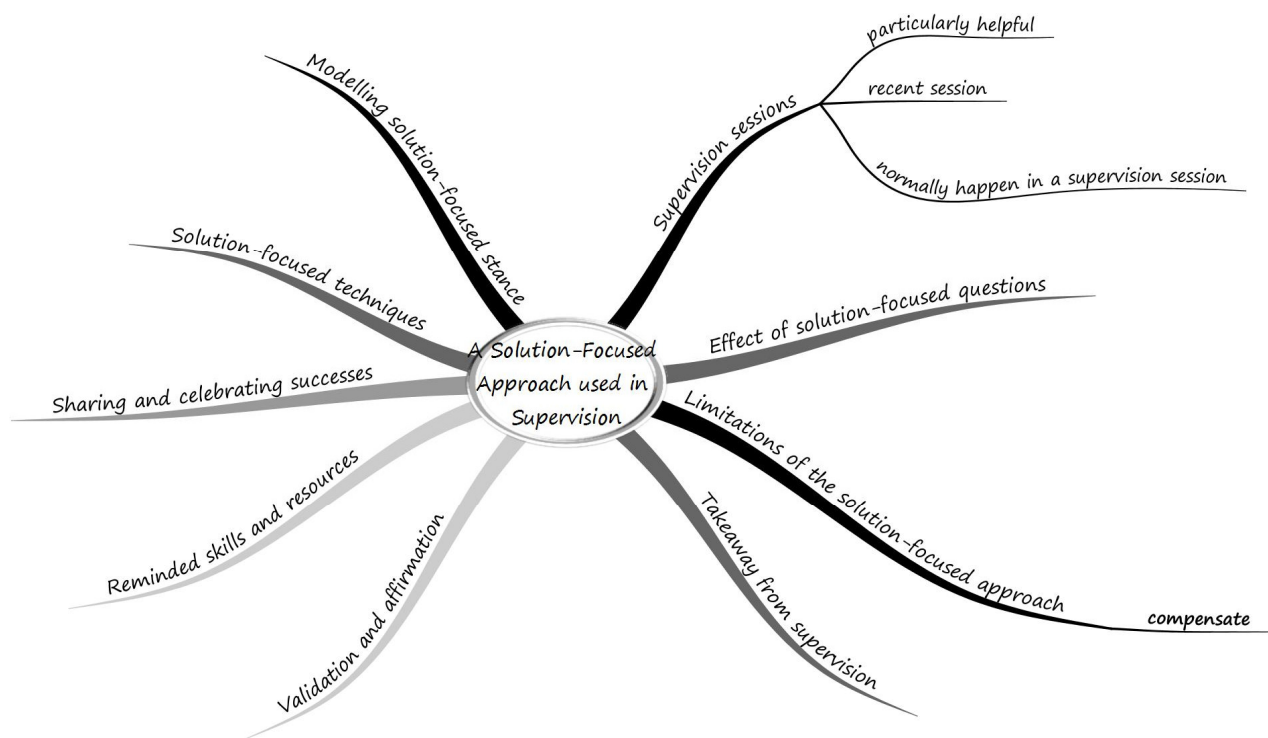


Figure 1: Theme 1: A Solution-Focused Approach used in Supervision

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category A: Effect of solution-focused questions.

The participants mentioned many specific solution-focused questions to describe how a solution-focused approach was used in their supervision. To share the richness of data and to

provide the reader with a possibility to deepen their understanding, some solution-focused questions asked by the participants' supervisors are, as described by the participants, listed here:

How did that make a difference?

What did you notice about them?

How will you know that it is different?

What has gone well?

What did you contribute to that?

How did you make that happen?

How did you contribute to framing that?

The participants described how they felt helped by the solution-focused questions and how the questions made them think and reflect.

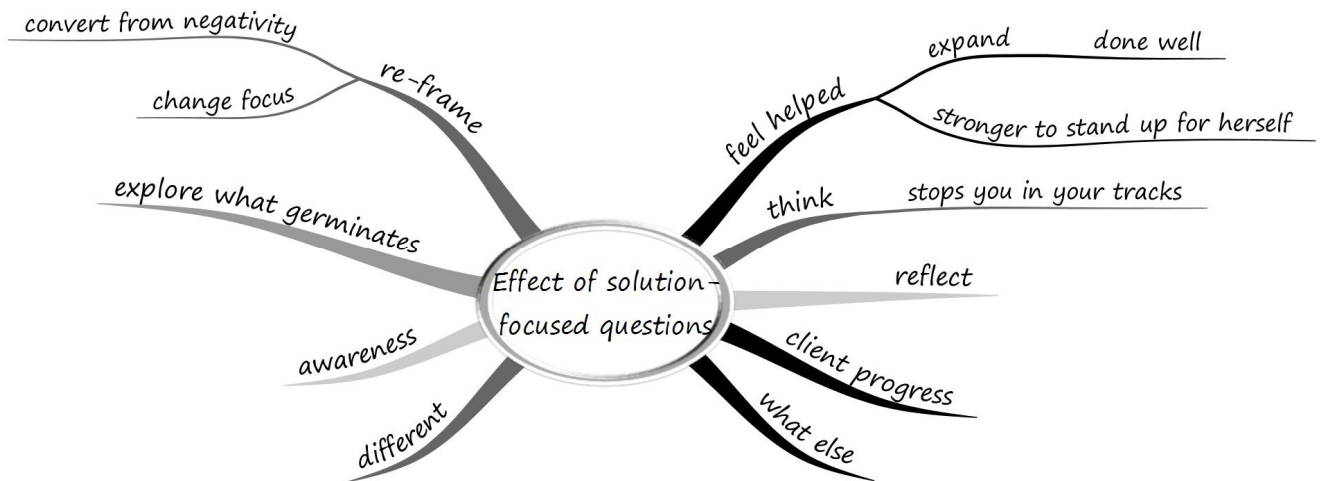


Figure 2: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category A: Effect of solution-focused questions

One participant described how she experienced the effect of the solution-focused questions asked by her supervisor: *“She is being very good at that sort of questions that stops you in your tracks and makes you think”*.

The participants described how their supervisors helped them by using “*real solution-focused stuff*” to expand on what they had done well and to reflect on what happened in their counselling sessions. The participants described the usefulness of solution-focused questions asked by the supervisor about sharing the client progress and what else they could have done. The participants described solution-focused questions wondering what would have happened if the counsellor had done something else and thereby leading them “*down a solution-focused questioning path*”. One participant described how her supervisor had used a “*good leading question*” to figure out whether what she had said was strong enough while reflecting on that she often “*tended to be gentle*”. She described how that supervision question made her feel strong enough to stand up for herself in a situation of conflict with a colleague.

Another participant described a helpful but also painful solution-focused question, which made her burst into tears in the supervision session and had enhanced her awareness of how grief, due to the recent loss of a friend, was present for her. She saw it as a useful question because she had been aware of the issue in the counselling session, but it became more evident for her when they talked about it in supervision. This experience was supported by another participant who described how the use of solution-focused questions helped her explore something that had already been “*germinating*” in her head.

A third participant described how the solution-focused questions helped her reframe the way she saw a client. She had been “*running into a brick wall*” and the supervisor’s question of what would happen if she gave the client “*a lot of compliments around what an amazing job they are doing*”, helped her to convert from feelings of negativity and focusing on the barriers.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category B: Solution-focused techniques.

The participants also described how other solution-focused techniques, among them compliments and scales were used in their solution-focused supervision.

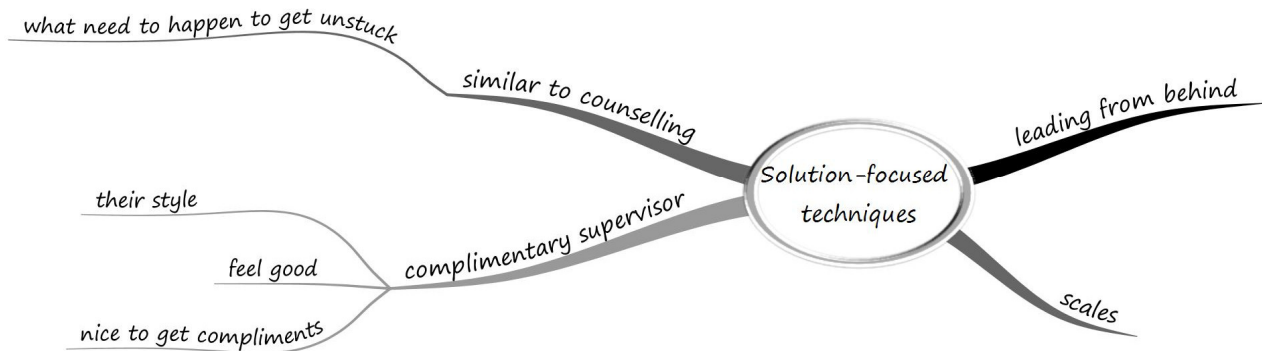


Figure 3: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category B: Solution-focused techniques

One participant highlighted the use of “a lot of scales”, a significant technique in solution-focused therapy and supervision, in her supervision sessions, and said:

It is similar to what you do with a client; she would ask me things like, if I think I am stuck with a case, she will ask what would need to be happening with this case if you would like to be getting unstuck.

Another technique from a solution-focused approach is present in the way the participants describe the use of compliments in their supervision. A participant with well over 20 years of experience as a counsellor said: “*She is also a very complimentary supervisor*”. Observing a big smile while she said that, I asked what difference that made. “*That seems to be their style. It just makes you feel good*”. This statement was supplemented by another participant saying: “*It is just nice to get compliments; that is part of the solution-focused approach*”.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category C: Sharing and celebrating successes.

All the participants described how they shared successes and what worked well for them in their counselling work and emphasised the importance of being acknowledged for “*how well I do*” and being able to celebrate those successes in their supervision. One said:

I talk about some fabulous stuff that happened to clients and the good stuff that I have done as a counsellor that I can feel really chuffed about. I love to share that kind of stuff with her because she is very encouraging.

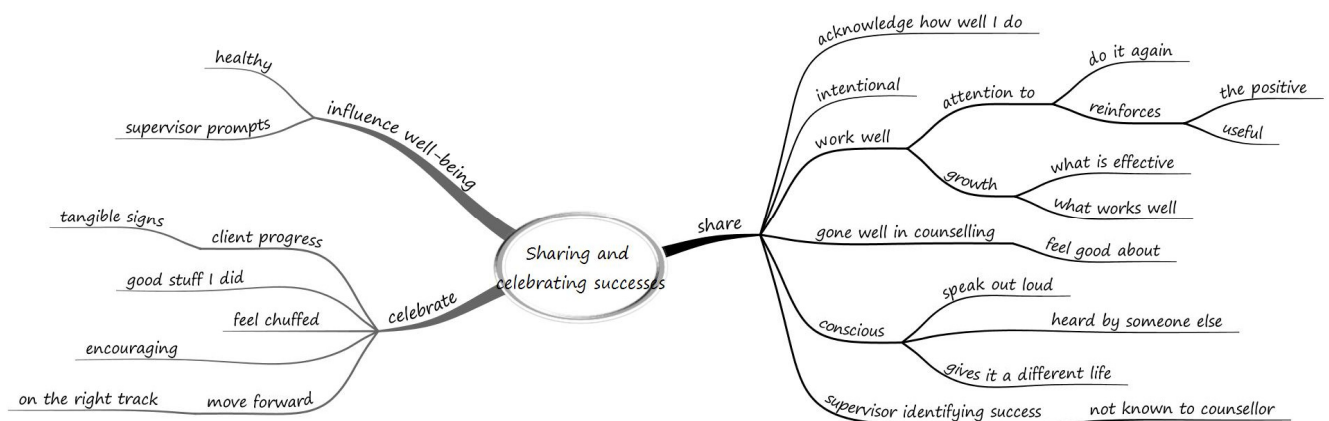


Figure 4: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category C: Sharing and celebrating successes

The participants described how the celebration of successes in supervision enabled them to move forward and think that they were “*on the right track*”. One participant explained how solution-focused supervision helped her draw attention to her skills and recall what worked well and thereby gave her a possibility to use it again. One participant explained that she thought her professional development and growth as a counsellor was dependant on having a possibility to gather information from herself about the things that worked well and was useful in her counselling practice. One participant reflected on how the solution-focused focus on what works influenced what they talked about in the supervision sessions:

Things that have gone well in counselling. Things that I feel good about. When I have seen a client make progress, these concrete, tangible sort of things that I can see.

One participant reflected on how sharing successes in solution-focused supervision influenced the level of her wellbeing, stating that it “*would not be healthy*” if she could not “*feel good about or celebrate the things that we are doing well*” knowing that she had always had supervisors who prompted that. One participant described how sharing successes in solution-focused supervision reinforced the things that are positive or useful in her counselling practice and made her more conscious by being able to speak it out loud, be heard by someone else and thereby “*kind of gives it a different life*”. Two participants defined how their solution-focused supervisors responded by identifying successes that they had not noticed themselves and how that was encouraging:

I suppose she is just trying to encourage me to be intentional about what I am doing well.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category D: Reminded skills and resources.

All of the participants considered having the possibility to talk about the skills and resources that they had used in their counselling sessions as an essential element in solution-focused supervision. The participants repeatedly used the word “*reminded*” when they described this element of focussing on their counsellor skills and resources used in the solution-focused supervision.

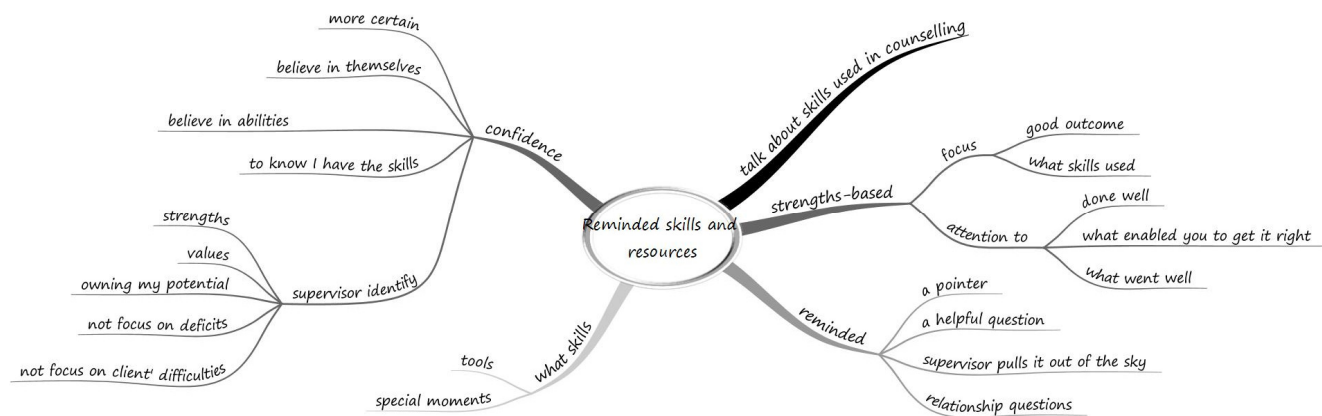


Figure 5: Theme 1 A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category D: Reminded of skills and resources

One participant emphasised the strength-based focus in a solution-focused approach and how that focus helped her realise what skills she used to reach a good outcome in counselling: *“The skills I have used, just in terms of the tools. I guess that I just love to share those special moments with somebody”*. One participant exemplified how she in her solution-focused supervision had been reminded of using the solution-focused relationship-question more. She described how she sometimes could forget the importance of the people around a client and asking the client what they think the relatives would notice:

You can sometimes just forget some of the pointers or the questions that are helpful in a particular situation, and she can just kind of pull it out of the sky and remind you.

Two participants explained how talking about counsellor skills and resources could give them confidence and a feeling of being more certain as a key thing in solution-focused supervision. The participants mentioned how their supervisor helped them believe in themselves and believe in their ability to be able to work well with the clients. They described how, as a counsellor, it was essential for good practice to know that they have the skills to be able to work with confidence. One participant reflected on how her supervisor identified her counsellor strengths and values to make it

possible to feel that she was “*owning my potential*” each time she met with a client, and to support and help that client rather than focus on deficits that she as a counsellor might have or on the difficulties of the client.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category E: Validation and affirmation.

Three of the participants highlighted the effect of being validated and affirmed in their solution-focused supervision. One participant described the validating experience of solution-focused supervision as particularly helpful by being able to voice and acknowledge where she was at, to hear what she was saying herself, and to get reflections, feedback, or comments from the supervisor. She explained how her solution-focused supervisor would reflect back using her own words with a few added comments increasing the richness and putting it into a positive framework.

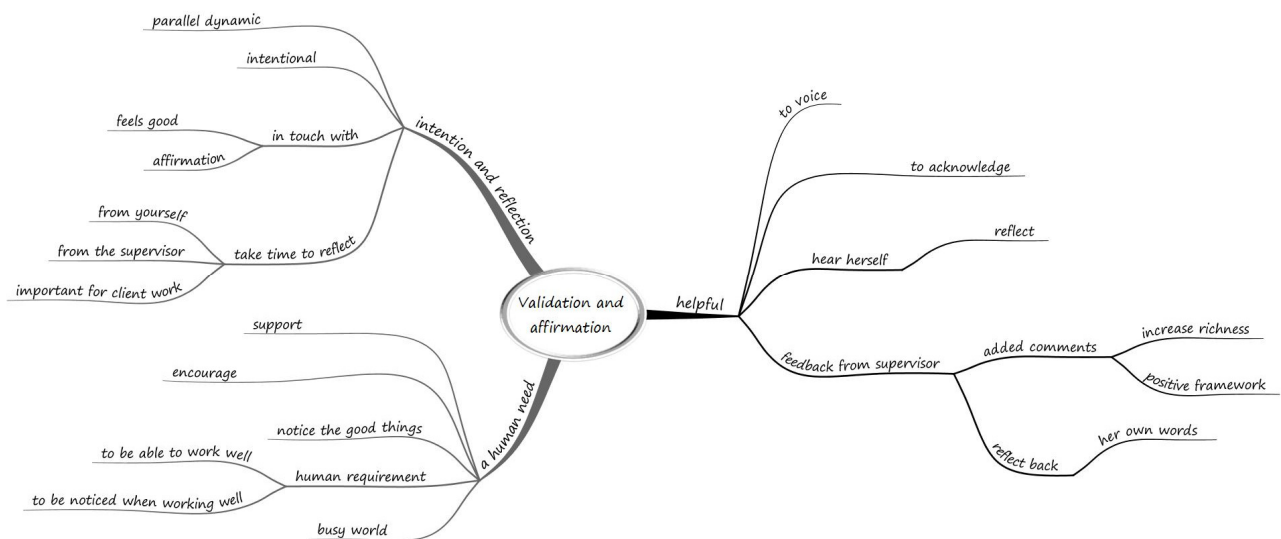


Figure 6: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category E: Validation and affirmation

One of the participants elaborated her view of the importance of being validated by stating that “*It is a human need really, no matter what you are doing*”. She explained how essential it was for her given the busy modern lifestyle where “*we often forget to support and encourage each*

other”. She emphasised that the validation was a “*human requirement*” to be able to work well as a counsellor.

Two participants reflected on the helpfulness of affirmation in their solution-focused supervision emphasising the importance of working based on intention and reflection in counselling practice. One of them said:

I think it helps me keep that parallel dynamic alive with my work, with clients and it makes me more intentional, that kind of dynamic. It keeps me in touch with how good it feels when something is affirmed. It is as much in yourself as it is from the supervisor but that you actually take the time to reflect on what is going well. That is important for client work.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category F: Modelling the solution-focused stance.

Some statements from the participants discussed that modelling of the solution-focused stance by the supervisor was prominent, not only regarding the use of solution-focused questions or techniques but also in conveying the fundamental assumptions from SFBT. The two participants who had a supervisor using solution-focused methods exclusively in their supervision practice embraced the importance of working from the same modality. One of those described how she found it useful to have a supervisor that was very experienced in the solution-focused approach when she got stuck with cases, and when she had tried everything regarding solution-focused techniques, the supervisor would always have something else to guide her to do.

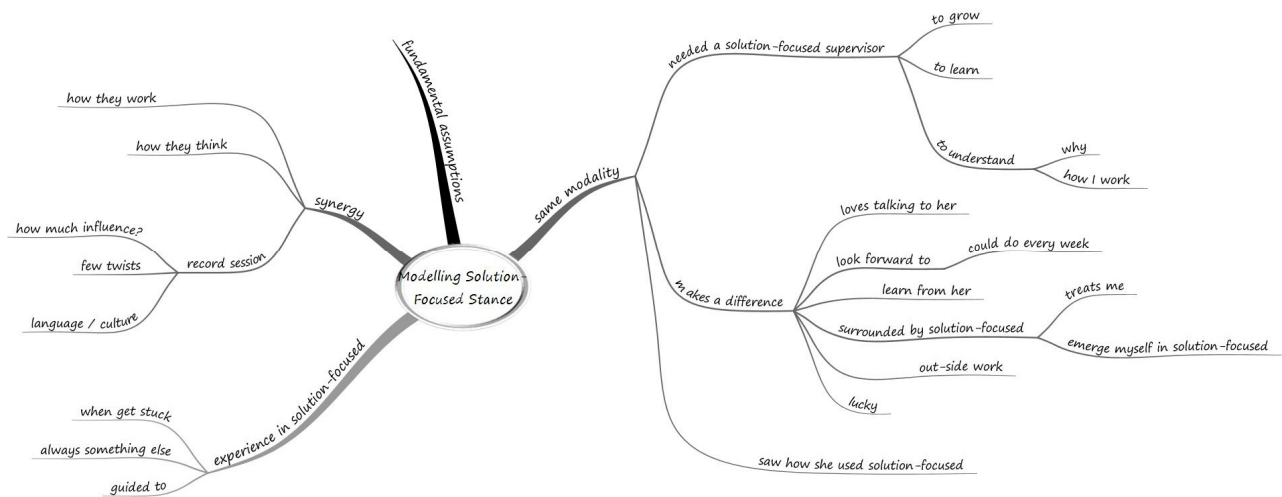


Figure 7: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category F: Modelling the solution-focused stance

One of the participants having a supervisor using a solution-focused approach exclusively described how she changed supervisor when she had met her current supervisor, and saw how she was using a solution-focused approach. She realised, she needed to have a supervisor who worked from the same approach, partly to grow and learn, and partly to gain a better understanding of how and why she worked as she did herself in her counselling practice:

It makes a huge difference for me, I mean I look forward to supervision, it is something I could do every week if I could. I just love talking to her and learning from her.

The same participant highlighted how being “surrounded by the solution-focused” in her supervision made a huge difference for her due to a working environment not using the solution-focused stance. She explained how she felt “treated with that solution-focused stuff” and how the modelling of a solution-focused approach had a huge effect in her life saying: “The more I can just emerge myself in solution-focused stuff the better, it is not just at work but everywhere”. She highlighted her point of view saying: “I would hate having a supervisor who was of a different approach and not the solution-focused one, so I am just so lucky”.

Two of the other participants saw the issue of modelling a solution-focused approach from a more questioning point of view and reflected on whether they intentionally modelled their supervisor knowing the influence of the supervisor's style of framing questions, and they wondered if there might be a natural synergy of how they both worked and their ways of thinking. One of them suggested:

It would be interesting to be a fly on the wall and record the supervision and then record the [counselling] sessions because it may and may not have. It might change in terms of the language or the culture of the client but the content might be the same, so it might be influential in that way even though there are a few twists.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category G: Takeaway from solution-focused supervision.

All of the participants described how a solution-focused supervision session made them feel and what they took away from the supervision sessions.

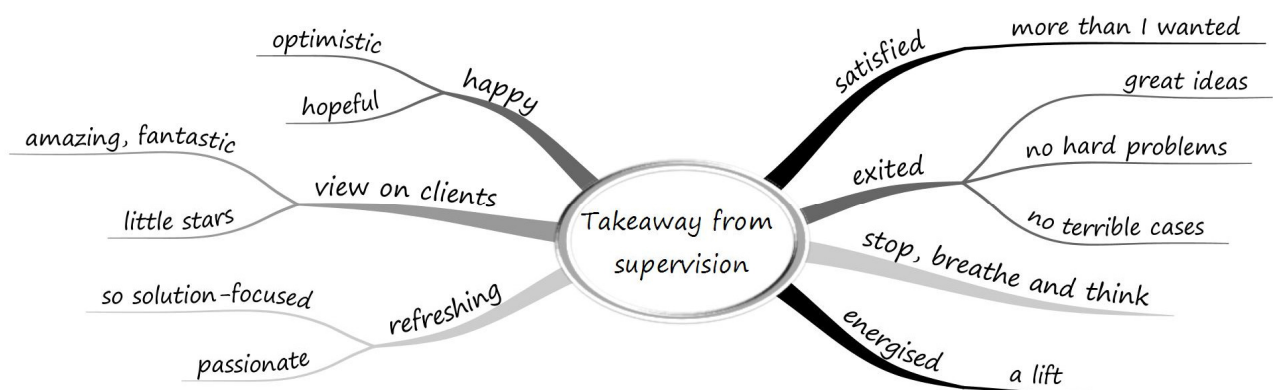


Figure 8: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category G: Takeaway from solution-focused supervision

The participants described how they were satisfied with their solution-focused supervision and often “come away with not just what I wanted, but more”. One participant exemplified that she

did not leave her solution-focused supervision with a feeling of dealing with terrible and hard problems, but came away excited and with a feeling of having “*some great ideas*”.

One participant reflected on her solution-focused supervision compared to previous supervision working from a more “*behavioural approach*”. She explained how she often came out of a solution-focused supervision session feeling energised and excited about when she was going to see the client next: “*I just come out happy I suppose, happy and optimistic and hopeful*”. She also said:

It is just refreshing for me to be able to have time with somebody who is so solution-focused and I think that spending time with someone who is passionate about something you are passionate about. It is the whole lift that you get from that. That is just energising for me. It gives me a chance to stop and breathe and think. I reflect on how far some of those clients have come and how amazing they are and how fantastic. They are little stars the way they grow.

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category H: Limitations

In the interviews, I asked the participants how they saw the limitations of solution-focused supervision and whether a solution-focused approach used in supervision could be insufficient sometimes. I asked the participants what worries they had about a solution-focused approach used in supervision.

Two of the participants were not able to locate anything that worried them regarding the use of a solution-focused approach in supervision. Four of the participants could mention issues that they saw as challenges or limitations in solution-focused supervision used as clinical supervision, while I did have to be slightly persistent in my questioning around the limitations of using a solution-focused approach in supervision to uncover answers and reflections from them.

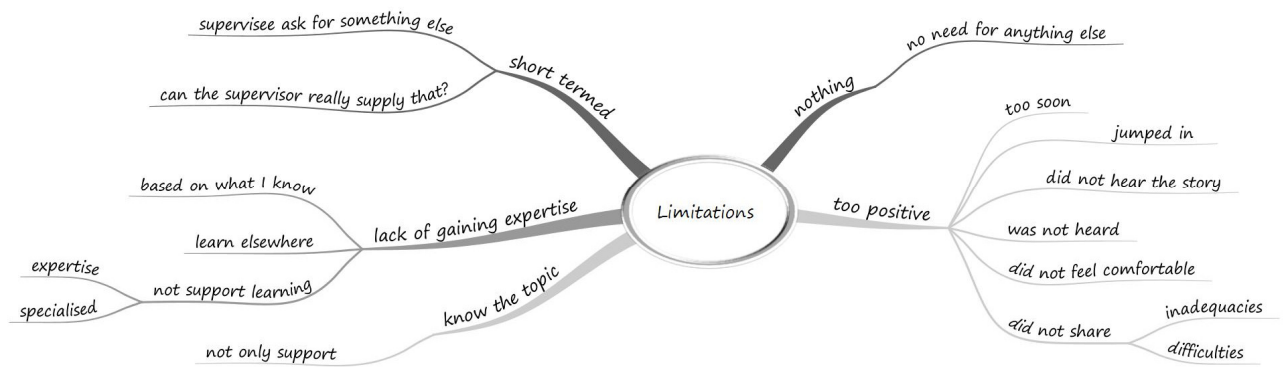


Figure 9: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category H: Limitations

One of the participants who could not mention any limitations had a supervisor using a solution-focused approach exclusively, and the other had a supervisor working from an integrated approach. During the analysis process, I have written in my research journal that it seemed noteworthy that they were not able to find any limitations to a solution-focused approach used in supervision. My reflection on this was whether it could be related to their positive bias to a solution-focused approach, which was very noticeable in those two participants, combined with a distinctly positive relationship with their supervisor. One of the participants explained her point of view this way:

Honestly, I cannot think of anything in my head. I think I can be backing it up by saying in the past with supervision, I often felt that I still needed to go and look for other information or get advice from other people, but with her I have not ever felt the need or thought: Oh, I wish I had gone and asked another colleague what they think. Because I am satisfied with it, I do not ever think that I did not get enough out of it. I have never yet come away thinking: Ah, I am still not sure about that.

One of the participants who could see some potential limitation remembered a former solution-focused supervisor whom she found did not meet her needs for talking about the problem

before looking for the solutions and how she was *“too positive”*. She explained how this supervisor had *“jumped in with the solution-focused questions very quickly without probing to get the whole story”*, and how that made her feel *“not really heard”*. She did not feel comfortable talking about and sharing her inadequacies and difficulties because this supervisor was *“too positive all of the time”*. Another participant found that it could be a challenge for her if the supervisor did not have knowledge of which topic she had brought to supervision, which can be an accepted approach in the solution-focused stance: *“I think if I had a supervisor that did not know the topic but only knew to support me and what I am needing to do, it might not be a good combination”*. Another participant was correspondingly aware of the importance of allowing enough space for talking about the problem or the topic brought into supervision, but seemed to have found a way to make it work collaboratively with her supervisor: *“I really appreciate that my supervisor does have solution-focused questions, but she gets a good picture of the things first and gets me thinking about that picture too”*.

A participant reflected on whether solution-focused supervision could imply a lack of gaining further expertise for the supervisee when the supervision was based on what she as a supervisee already knew. This participant also wondered whether solution-focused supervision could give her the expertise or specialised learning that was required in her counselling work. She emphasised that she needed to learn and got that learning outside solution-focused supervision, and more driven from herself than from the supervisor. She reflected on that there might be a risk that a solution-focused supervisor kept working with the supervisee one-to-one and not sufficiently supported other learning.

One participant mentioned a solution-focused approach focusing on being short termed and additionally allowing the supervisee to ask for what they needed and found helpful as a limitation.

This participant questioned if a solution-focused supervisor necessarily could deliver what the counsellor needed:

I do think the solution-focused approach as a supervision approach does have weaknesses. I think it is short term. I think it is an approach which because it uses the idea of whatever works, then people can come in and do whatever they want, but does the actual supervisor have the skills to work with the person in the way, that they want to work. The solution-focused would say that is fine but should you then be working with them? I do think that some of the longer-term styles of counselling involving self-conscious processes and things like that, solution-focused allow that, but does the supervisor have the skills to do it?

A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category I: Compensate.

I asked the participants what could compensate for the limitations of a solution-focused approach used in supervision, and they explained that the counsellor was the one having the responsibility of what was brought into supervision.

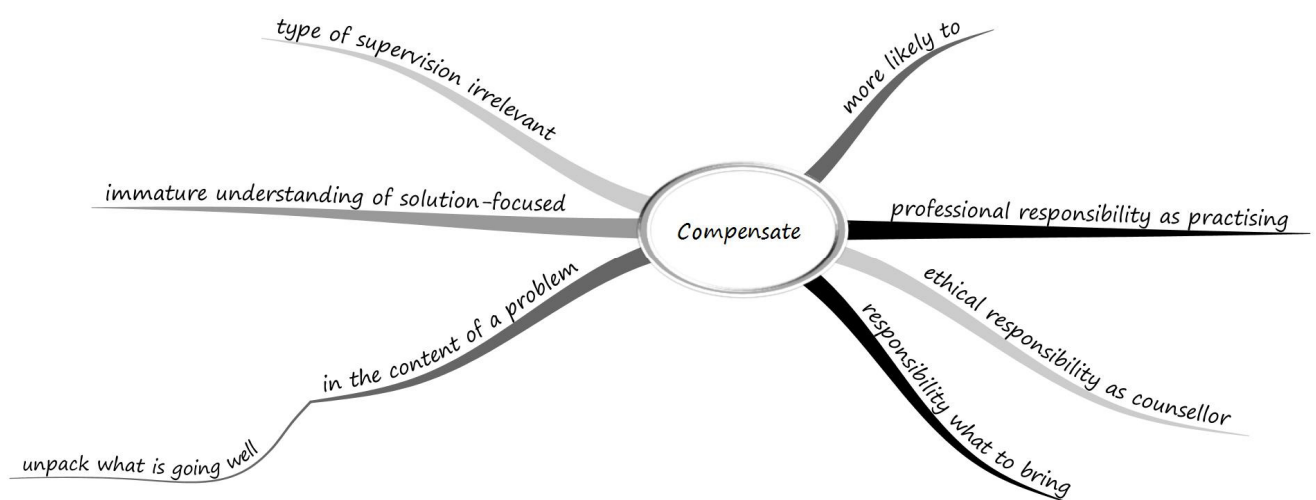


Figure 10: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category I: Compensate

One of the counsellors explained how she took responsibility for bringing what she was worried about in her professional practice or things that she perceived was not working so well. She reflected on that she was more likely to bring that kind of issue than to recognise the positive elements of her counselling practice.

Two of the participants emphasised the ethical and professional responsibility of a practising counsellor and outlined that they thought the type of supervision was irrelevant in that context.

You will be bringing things that you want help with, that you want to work with as a supervisee. I do not think I would know anyone that would just bring what is going well.

Usually, it is within the content of a problem that the supervisor might be able to unpack what is going well. It is not that you just take along everything that is glowing. I would say that is an immature understanding of the solution-focused process.

The analysis of how some of the participants described how they saw the possibilities of compensating for the potential limitations of using a solution-focused approach in supervision by fulfilling their own ethical responsibility as practising counsellors to bring what is relevant, important and necessary to supervision made me reflect. In my reflective notes on this topic, I wondered whether that might have a connection to either their level of experience or to their level of activity in professional counselling associations with very similar views on counsellor responsibility.

Summary of theme one – A solution-focused approach used in supervision.

The participants described how the solution-focused questions, techniques, and assumptions were used in their solution-focused supervision. During the analysis process, I noticed how they could reproduce questions exactly worded, which made me wonder if those questions might be

frequently occurring in their solution-focused supervision. The participants highlighted the element of sharing and celebrating the successes of their professional practice. They emphasised the usefulness of being complimented and of focussing on what they were doing well. One of the words that participants repeated in the interviews was the word “*reminded*”. The participants repeated over and over how solution-focused supervision had reminded them of their skills and resources, reminded them about solution-focused techniques, reminded them of their knowledge, and reminded them about the client’s progress, strengths, and resources. Validation and affirmation were mentioned as a basic need for a practising counsellor. I was impressed by the way the participants described what they took away from solution-focused supervision. In fact, I did not ask them that question in the interviews, but they all shared thoughts of how they felt leaving their solution-focused supervision. In my research journal, I wrote: “*It is remarkable how they describe feelings of being energised, more hopeful, and even happy, it makes me wonder if that is an implicit effect of a solution-focused approach*”.

The analysis showed how they were influenced by a solution-focused approach, and how their language and wording were infused with solution-focused language. Given the fact that the counsellors were all solution-focused practitioners themselves, to varying extents, I wondered whether the influence of solution-focused supervision and the modelling of their supervisor might enhance and elaborate their solution-focused language as counsellors.

Four of the participants indicated limitations of the solution-focused supervision as when the supervisor was too positive, did not listen properly to the problem or the story, or did not have appropriate knowledge about the topic, which made them less inclined to bring difficult cases to their supervision. Another limitation emphasised was the short-term focus of a solution-focused approach combined with worry about whether the solution-focused supervisor always could deliver sufficient expert knowledge and thereby fulfil the supervisee’s needs for learning. The participants

described how they saw the possibilities of compensating for the mentioned limitations mainly by fulfilling their own ethical responsibility as practising counsellors.

Theme Two: The Supervisory Relationship

One of the findings of this study that I found significant was how the participants emphasised the importance of the relationship and the collaborative nature of the working alliance with their solution-focused supervisor.

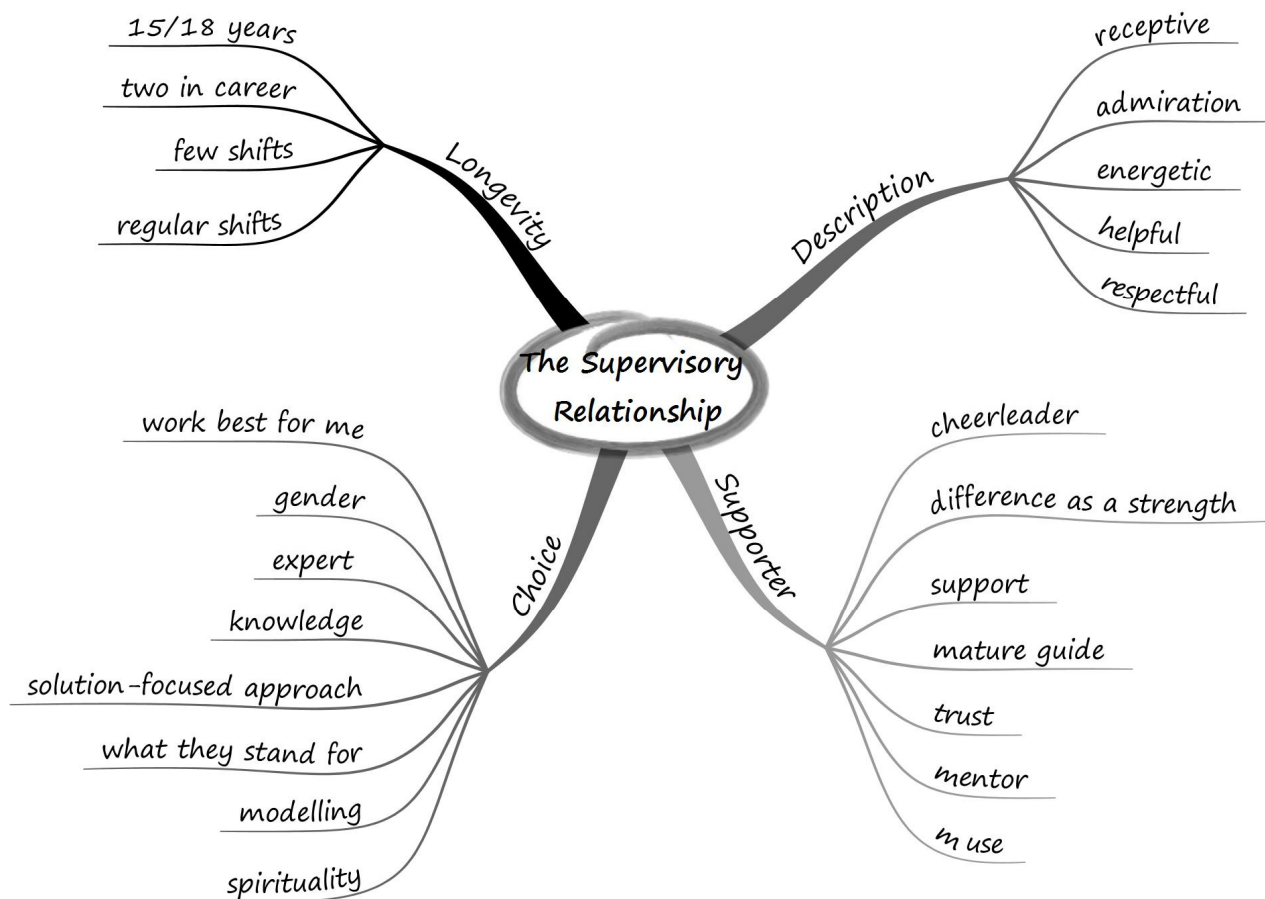


Figure 11: Theme 2: The Supervisory Relationship

The supervisory relationship – Category A: Description.

This category reflects how the participants used many similar words when they described how they regarded their solution-focused supervisor. The participants spoke with affection and

admiration of their supervisors and repeatedly used words such as, knowledgeable, responsive, warm, acknowledging, and calm when they described their solution-focused supervisor.

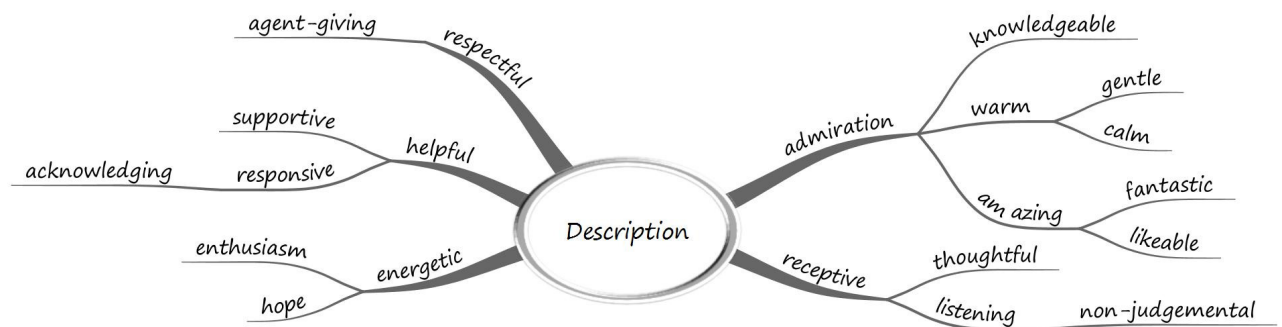


Figure 12: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category A: Description

They also emphasised that the solution-focused supervisors were receptive, thoughtful, and listened without judgement. One participant described how her supervisor had a “*large amount of energy, enthusiasm, and hope*”, and another highlighted the helpfulness and supportive attitude from the supervisor. Another participant highlighted her supervisor as being respectful, agent-giving, and gentle. One of the participants said:

I am very lucky that I have got an amazing supervisor. She is amazing, so fantastic. I think it is both, I mean she is extremely likeable and a really nice down to earth person.

The way the participants described their supervisor appeared to be a very important element in how the solution-focused supervision worked for them. In the analysis process, those highly positive descriptions caused me to explore the supervisory relationship and started the development of this theme. The significance of the supervisory relationship will be elaborated in the following categories.

The supervisory relationship – Category B: Longevity.

The first two participants I interviewed explained that they had had the same supervisor for many years and this made me curious about the length of the supervisory relationship. I, therefore, decided to ask participants in the rest of the interviews about the length of their relationship with the same supervisor and about their perspectives about staying with the same, or shifting, supervisor. The majority of participants had chosen to stay with the same supervisor for a continuous number of years. One of the participants had the same supervisor for 18 years and had never had any other supervisor, while another participant had been with the same supervisor for 15 years.

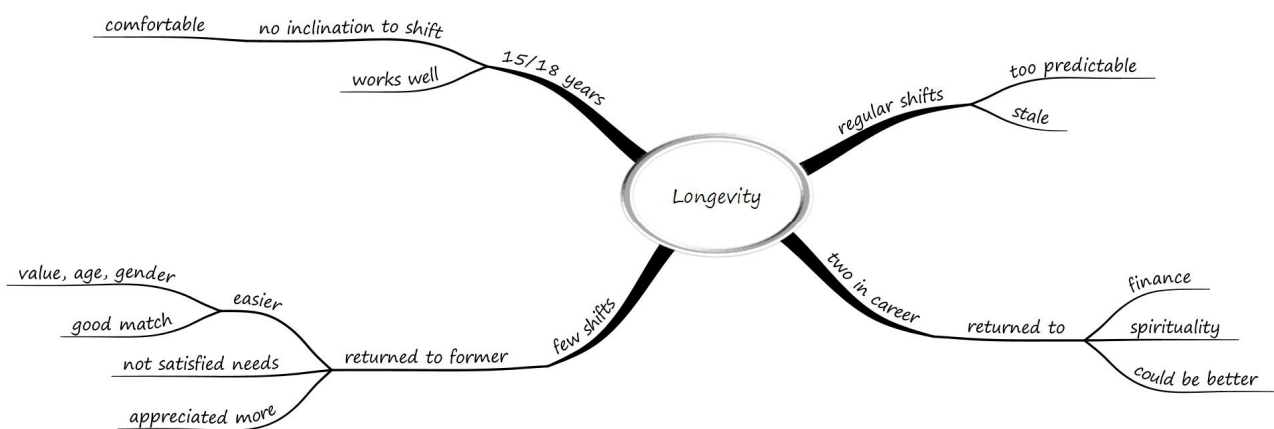


Figure 13: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category B: Longevity

The participants with a significantly long relationship with the same supervisor described how they did not have any inclination to shift to another supervisor because the relationship worked well for them. One of them explained:

I probably should have changed supervisor, but I did not [...] because, on the one hand, I was comfortable, but on the other hand I knew that if she had any significant concerns, and we had a contract which said this, would raise them with me and if she was not satisfied, that it had been addressed.

Two participants had only had two different supervisors in their whole career, and one of them had returned to the first supervisor again recently. This latter-mentioned participant had just gone through a major transition regarding workplace and working environment and had chosen to shift supervisor because of that. Her current supervisor had been her supervisor earlier in her career, and the rationale for shifting was mainly a combination of economy and a need for a more spiritual element in the supervision, but also that they had come to “*bit of a pattern*”, and she needed a different perspective:

We agreed to give it a break and I just naturally gravitated back to the original supervisor. They have different strengths as supervisors, and I think where I am at right now the first supervisor is right for me. I am very interested in what their views are so there is a good reason to change. One is more, I would not say secular, but one of the supervisors is a lot more spiritual, but the other supervisor is more technical.

A third participant had changed back to her current supervisor after having had a few other supervisors in between and did not appreciate them quite as much, and they did not satisfy her supervisory needs. She reflected on the idea of shifting between supervisors:

It just feels so much easier. You just have this thing where you had to change your supervisor all of the time, but I do not agree with it. I have actually gone back to her. Something about our values, age and gender all that stuff of things that makes us a good fit.

One participant had a different view on choosing and shifting supervisor because she believed that a regular shift between supervisors could be constructive, and when I asked how she would know when to change to another supervisor she replied:

I suppose if there was no new learning or not any sort of shift in practice or challenges or something like that, when it becomes a bit too predictable perhaps [...] I think supervision can get stale; it just can become a very familiar pattern I suppose. It does not mean it is any less effective, but sometimes I think a shift is not a bad thing.

One participant had several years ago shifted to her current supervisor after being trained in a solution-focused approach herself and therefore wanted to have a supervisor who worked from the same approach.

In my reflective practice, at the end of my second year as a trainee counsellor, I made an evaluating reflection on my solution-focused supervision and the relationship to my supervisor:

I have to consider my future supervision, the easiest and most comfortable would be to continue with my current supervisor, it has worked well for me, but I need to sit down and consider whether I might need something else or stay with the safe and well-known way.

The longevity of the supervisory relationship and the recurrence of returning to a prior supervisor shown by the participants in this study made me wonder if the solution-focused approach had any influence on the participants' experience of a useful and positive supervisory relationship that made them choose to stay with their supervisor.

The supervisory relationship – Category C: Choice

All six participants had chosen their solution-focused supervisor themselves and described how they found it essential to have this agency to choose supervisor.

I am lucky in my job; I think if I worked for the DHB [District Health Board] or something like that, they would dictate who my supervisor was. That would be a call-back for me, and I would probably turn down the job if I could not pick my supervisor.

The participants described in different ways, and often with more than one motive, why they had selected their current solution-focused supervisor and showed a high level of awareness on the rationale for, and the reflections behind, their choices.

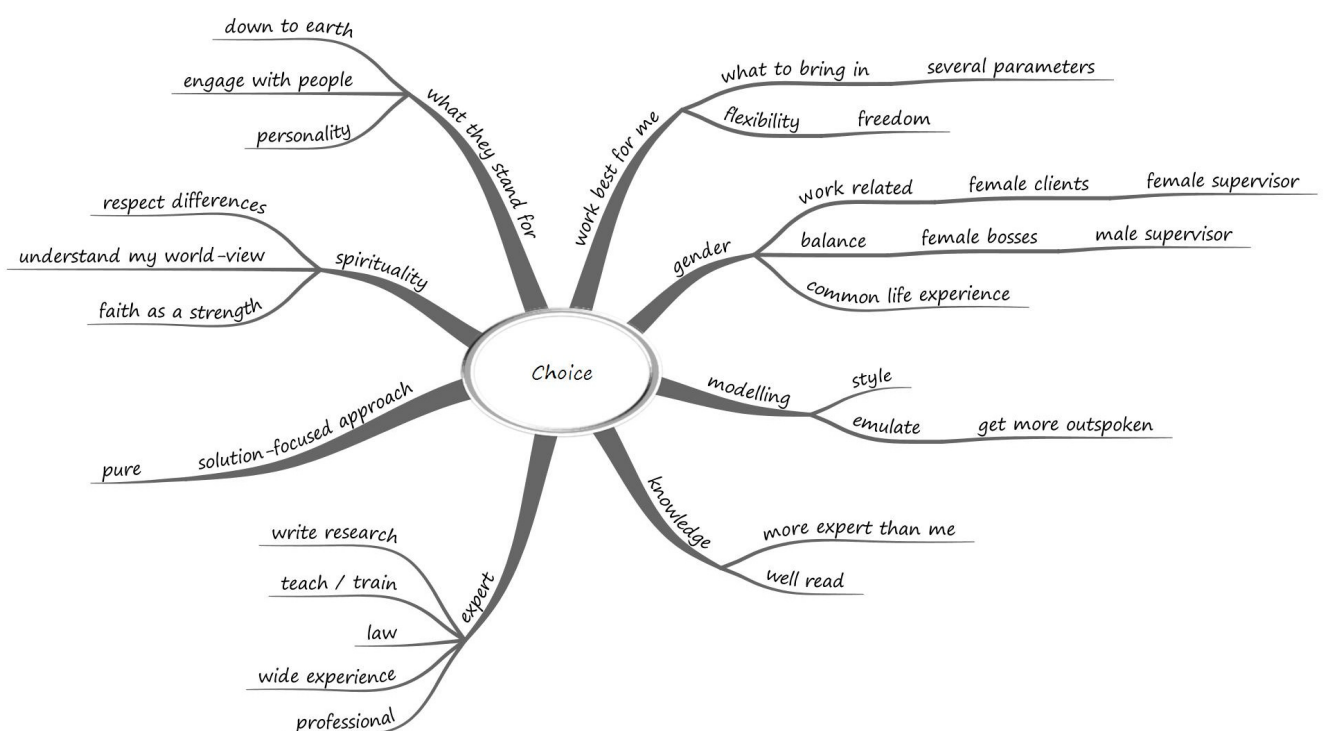


Figure 14: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category C: Choice

One participant described how she had deliberately chosen a supervisor who made it possible for her to use supervision as it worked best for her, which was a solution-focused supervisor that supported her choice of what to bring into supervision. She both appreciated and expected flexibility and freedom to have several parameters in her supervision, ranging from

political to clinical, and more personal content and had chosen a supervisor who was willing to do that.

Three participants had same-gender supervisors, and three participants had supervisors of a different gender. Three of the participants expressed that the gender of the supervisor was a deliberate choice with the intent to source more balance to their work environment or to support their client work with supernumerary female clients. Two of those three participants had chosen a supervisor of the same gender, and one of them had chosen a supervisor of opposite gender.

I have always thought I should have a female supervisor since my caseload was 90% or more female and I was quite keen to have a supervisor who was a very experienced ACC [Accident Compensation Corporation] counsellor because I always have had a lot of sexual abuse work. So, I thought it was good to have those two strengths in my supervisor.

The other three participants had chosen their solution-focused supervisor independent of gender and based on other factors. The participants described how they had made their choice of supervisor based on the supervisor's experience, knowledge, or modality, but the most powerful motivator seemed to be the way the supervisors were living their lives, what they stood for, and their expressed values and attitudes.

She encourages me in my values, and I guess you get a feeling that when someone supports your values, that I guess culturally we come from a similar background. I can see that she is kind of an educated woman, who is similar age and has been through a divorce and remarried and that sort of things, that makes me just kind of know that we have encountered some of the same things in life. It is a nice sense of security that somebody is understanding.

The participants perceived their solution-focused supervisor as a person that they wanted to model, mainly in the form of their personal style. Three of the participants said that they would like to develop an identical personal style. Two participants described how they were aware that wanting to stay with the same supervisor for many years was directly connected to the supervisor's style and personality.

The reason why I chose both of them is because I like the way they work as people, as individuals, not just in the supervision room, but outside of the supervision room. I have got the chance to meet both of them beforehand, and one was in an educational setting, and the other was in a training setting, and I liked their style. Both of them had styles that I thought I would like to emulate, so there is a whole modelling thing.

One of the participants reflected while we were talking about the solution-focused supervisor's style and personality, and how that might have influenced her. It was new to her, but she realised that having that particular solution-focused supervisor had helped her to become much more outspoken than she would have been before she became her supervisor.

The solution-focused supervisors had also been chosen by the counsellors because of their extensive experience in a similar working field, because they taught or trained counsellors, or because they wrote research and literature. All the participants described their current solution-focused supervisors as experts, with "*a wealth of knowledge*", or "*so extensively well read, it is unbelievable*". One of the participants with an extensive number of years of counselling experience said, with a big smile: "*In a way, I am reasonably an expert, so I needed someone more expert than me*".

The supervisors' level of professionalism was likewise emphasised by the counsellors as an essential element in solution-focused supervision. One of the participants mentions how her

supervisor had a good knowledge of the law, describing her as “*absolutely professional*” with a wide experience of counselling.

One of the participants emphasised the importance of their supervisor’s approach being “*pure solution-focused*”, but nevertheless struggling to separate that from the personality of the supervisor: “*We have a really good relationship, and I said to her: ‘Nothing can never ever happen to you, because I cannot cope if I have to end up with a non-solution-focused supervisor’*”. When I asked if she could imagine a similar relationship with another supervisor, she answered that if that person was as solution-focused, helpful, and knowledgeable as her current supervisor, it might not make any difference. She emphasised that she would have “*to click with them, like I do with her*” to make it work for her and stated: “*It is hard to imagine a different human being, than what I have got*”.

Another participant, who also had a supervisor using a solution-focused approach exclusively, was putting relatively more weight on the person and the expertise of the supervisor than on her solution-focused approach.

Well, I mean she is highly intelligent. She teaches what it is about, so you can sort of tap into that. I think, in that respect, it is about her and what she brings to the role rather than the model that she uses. I think she is interesting; she has wide experience, she has done professional development overseas. She brings a hell of a lot to it.

The supervisory relationship – Category D: Supporter.

The participants emphasised their solution-focused supervisor as their supporter, mature guide, mentor, and the word “*cheerleader*” appeared as a narrative description from two of the participants. One of the counsellors described how she was able to talk about anything from what had happened with her children, to her love life, and the challenges of her life.

The participants described a high level of reciprocal trust and a frame enhancing honesty in the supervisory relationship as crucial for their benefit of solution-focused supervision. The counsellors explained how they were open and honest and felt a mutual understanding between themselves and their supervisor.

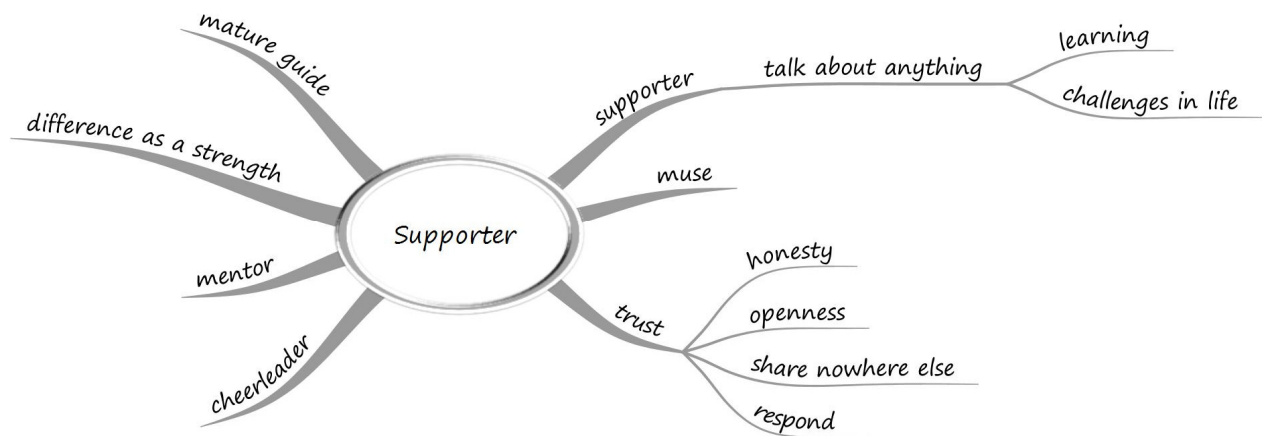


Figure 15: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship – Category D: Supporter

One of the participants explained how she did not go into a lot of details but would tell the supervisor as much as needed to provide good advice and guidance. She also reflected on the line between what a supervisor needs to know and what will be sufficient information without requiring enhancement. Another participant reflected on the level of trust and honesty in her supervisory relationship:

There are probably some things in supervision that I would share, that I would not share anywhere else, that I would not necessarily discuss with anyone else in terms of my personal response to a situation.

When I asked the participants how the level of trust between her and the supervisor had been built, one of the participants described that she thought the supervisor had a big influence on that,

how she responded, how she commented on the ideas she presented in the solution-focused supervision sessions. She elaborated by explaining that, if what the supervisor said repeatedly did not make sense to her, she would question the value of that supervision relationship.

One of the participants highlighted the differences between herself and her supervisor as a strength in the supervisory relationship describing how the solution-focused supervisor was cautious and careful, where she was “*bit of a bull at the gate sometimes*”, emphasising the supervisor’s voice of common sense, reason, and ethics.

Three of the participants valued that there was space for spirituality in the solution-focused supervisory relationship. One of the participants explained how it was important to her that the supervisor tried to understand her worldview, was respectful of differences, and how that sometimes could be honoured at a spiritual level. She elaborated by describing a solution-focused supervision session after a friend of hers had died and the supervisor had lit a candle when she came. Another participant mentioned how she felt that her Christian faith was supported in the solution-focused supervision and how she experienced that it was recognised as a strength by the supervisor.

All the participants described the relationship with their solution-focused supervisors as having a critical role in their professional practice. The following quote, which encompasses much of the participant responses mentioned above, sums up the solution-focused supervisors’ role as a supporter:

She is my support, my role model, I was going to say the word muse, but I am not sure if that is right. I will do that, my muse.

Summary of theme two – The supervisory relationship.

The participants described their solution-focused supervisors with high regard and used words full of respect and admiration, which surprised me, given that the participants are extensively experienced themselves and in the interviews presented themselves as highly competent. The participants had made a thoughtful choice of a supervisor that made the solution-focused supervision work best for them regarding working style, gender, and making room for spirituality. In my research journal during the interview phase, I made a note whether there might be a pattern of gender bias, but the analysis of the findings could not confirm that but rather showed a more individually biased or work-related choice. The participants emphasised the importance of the supervisor's level of experience, professionalism and specialist knowledge and one of the participants had chosen her supervisor mainly because of this supervisor's exclusive use of a solution-focused approach in her supervision practice. Significantly, the participants had chosen their supervisor based on the supervisor's personality and what they stood for outside the solution-focused supervision. A facet in the findings which surprised me—because of the extensive experience of the participants—was their vision of their solution-focused supervisor as a person that they wished to develop to be like both professionally and personally. Just after the interview with a participant that I did not know before the interview, I wrote in my reflective notes: *“It was astonishing to hear how this extremely experienced and confident counsellor wanted to grow to emulate her supervisor, knowing who her supervisor is, I think she has actually managed to accomplish that many years ago.”*

Five of my participants had either had their supervisor for a very long time or had shifted back to a prior supervisor. Only one of the participants expressed that she considered a regular shift between supervisors constructive. In my research journal, I wondered whether the longevity of the solution-focused supervisory relationship potentially shows the importance of the supervisory

relationship and probably is also an indication of the supervisor's influence on the counsellor's professional development over so many years. The participants expressed a sense of having a supporter, a cheerleader, a mentor and a muse and they suggested that the role modelling, in terms of both personal and professional style, might influence their own counselling style.

Theme Three: The Role of Solution-focused Supervision

The role of the supervision as a significant characteristic of solution-focused supervision was a significant feature of the data. Because of this, I decided to explore how the participants saw the role of solution-focused supervision.

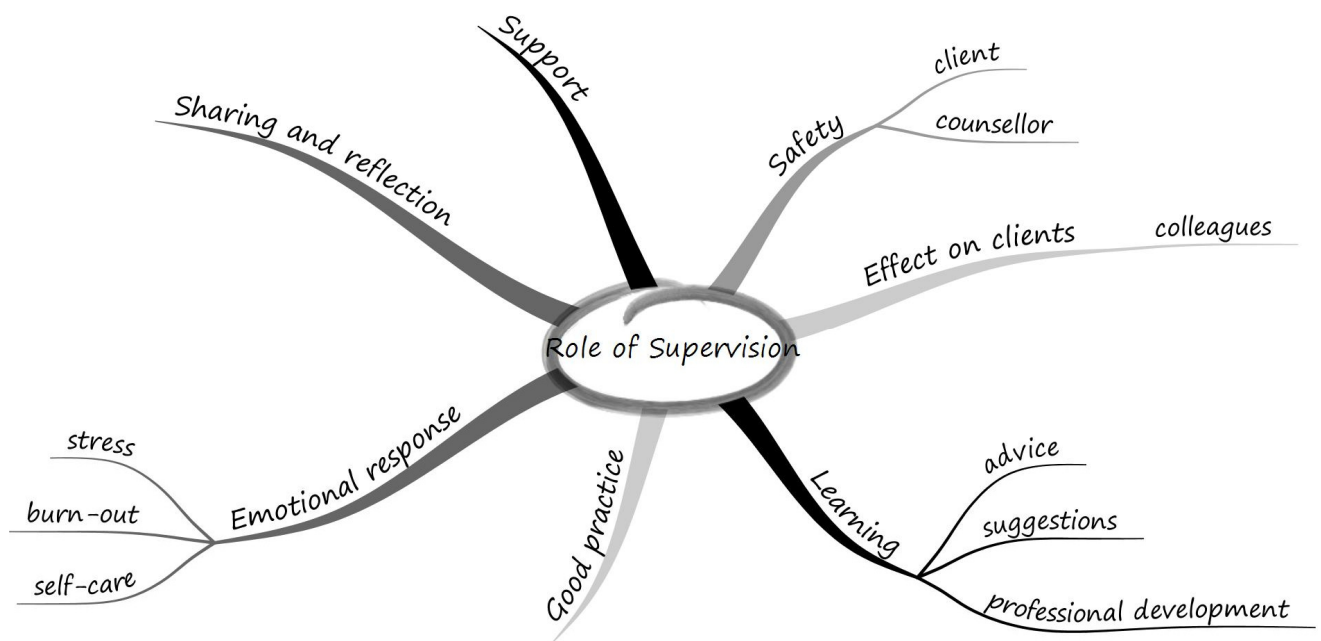


Figure 16: Theme 3: The Role of Solution-focused Supervision

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Support.

All of the participants described how the feeling of being supported by their supervisor was an essential element in solution-focused supervision. The supervisors function as a supporter has also been mentioned in the previous finding section about the supervisory relationship, but it is elaborated here in terms of role.

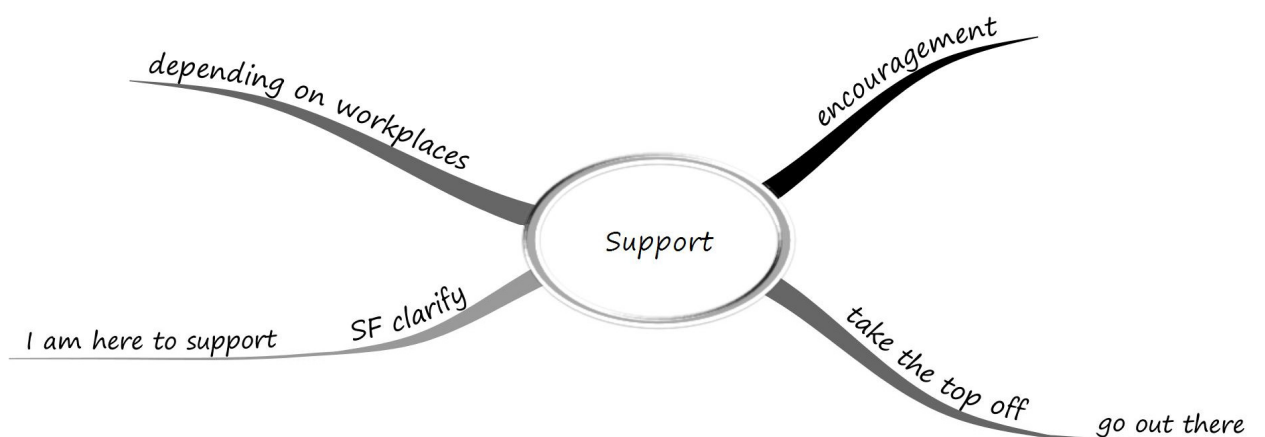


Figure 17: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Support

The participants described how they felt encouraged when talking about what they had done well, or when they had managed a challenge in their work. They also described how their supervisor's support had given them the courage to do new things like facilitating a workshop or had "*taken the top off*" big decisions in the process of transition. Another participant described how, in a difficult situation, she had appreciated her supervisor's support:

It was actually really encouraging that I had kind of coped with it well, managed to hang in there and so she was just very lovely, and I felt very supported by her.

One participant described how, over the years, she had needed various levels of support, primarily depending on the workplaces she had been working at. Another participant reflected that she had experienced supervisors from other modalities than a solution-focused approach being inclined to take an action-oriented role, and described the solution-focused approach as "*a good model for supervision*" with a distinct role of supporting the supervisees to their desired changes. This participant highlighted the role of a solution-focused supervisor to support and empower the supervisee and not to act on behalf of the supervisee.

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Sharing and being reminded.

To be able to share, be reminded, and use the supervision session as a setting for reflections were elements that all the participants indicated as essential characteristics of their solution-focused supervision.

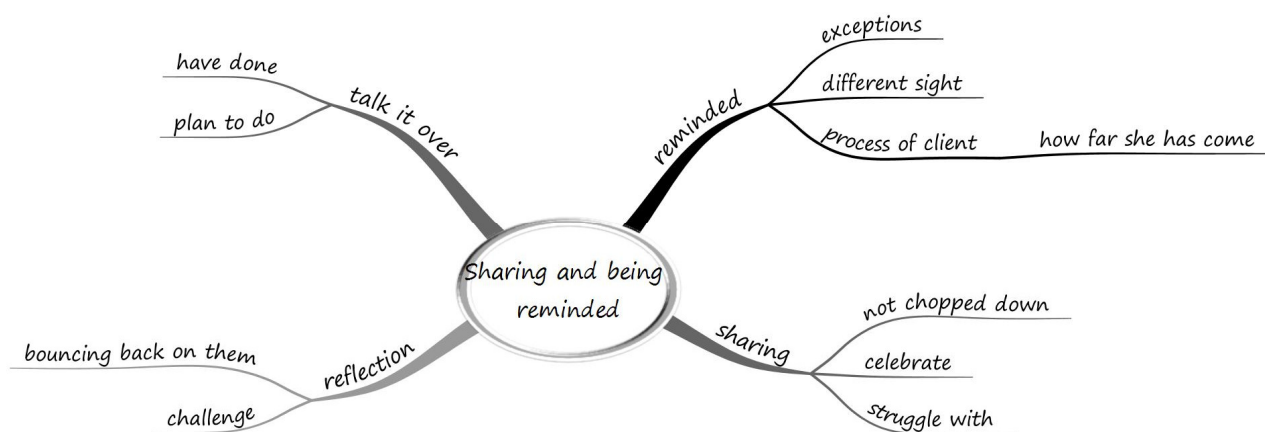


Figure 18: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Sharing and being reminded

Three of the participants described how they appreciated being able to share elements of what was going on in their counselling practice, and how talking about both what they were struggling with and what they could celebrate, was an essential role of solution-focused supervision. The counsellors described how they, together with the solution-focused supervisor, talked over what they were thinking about doing, or what they had been doing. One of the counsellors explained how she would talk through any issue and use the solution-focused supervision as a chance to hear herself talk while reflecting and “*bouncing thoughts*” off the supervisor. Another participant described it like this: “*I just want to share it because it is a time when I am not chopped down for being a tall poppy*”.

One of the participants reflected on how her solution-focused supervision aligned what happened in a solution-focused counselling session as the supervisee, setting the goals, knowing what she wanted to get out of it, and how it could be useful for her.

Two of the participants highlighted how the solution-focused supervision reminded them of both prior successes and their counselling client's progress. One of the participants described how, in her recent solution-focused supervision session, she had been reminded of the progress that a client had made, how far that client had come in a short time, and how, a couple of months ago, she would not have thought it possible to get so far. Another participant explained:

She is very good at reminding me of, I guess it is solution-focused stuff all around, past exceptions and other problems I have dealt with in the past and just putting a different sight on it.

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Emotional response.

In different ways, all the participants described how they used solution-focused supervision to be aware of when they had an emotional response to their work with clients, encountered stress and needed to take care of themselves. One of them described it like this: “A *really important part of supervision is to track your own emotional response to the work and where it comes from, or how it might interfere with it all. How it might enhance it*”.

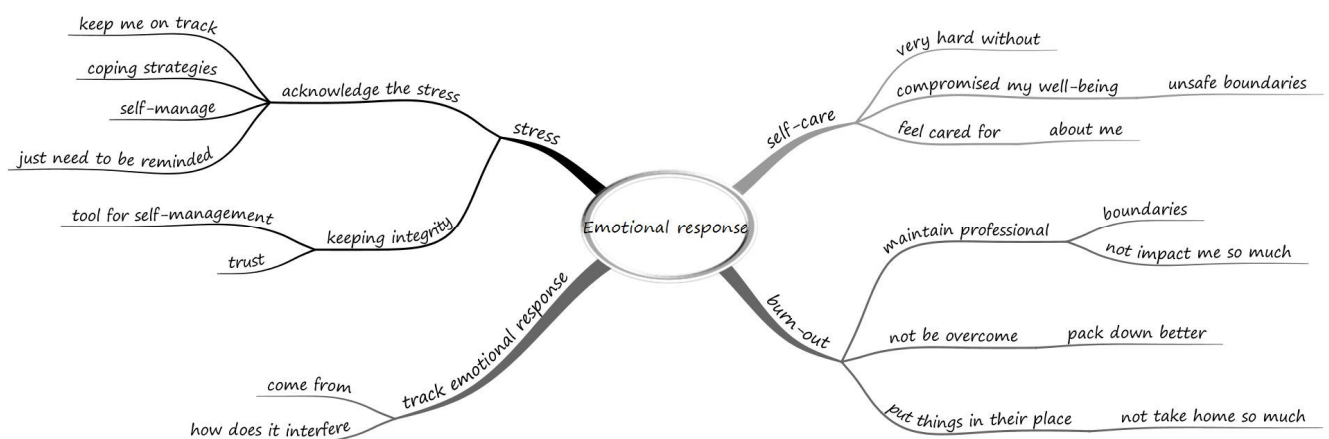


Figure 19: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Emotional response

The participants described how solution-focused supervision was supporting them to find a healthy balance and not take things home so much. Some of them reflected on the effect of solution-focused supervision on managing stress and preventing burn-out. As one participant said:

Keeping a balance of the things and being able to maintain a professional stance and not be overcome by situations and circumstances that the client brings in. I guess it helps me maintain my personal boundaries around client work so that it is not impacting on me so much. I do not get emotionally impacted by the terrible stories I have heard. What I am able to do a little bit better now is pack up after a session more quickly.

I asked one participant if she supposed that solution-focused supervision could make a difference in a counsellor's ability to stay in the profession for many years. She replied that it was a possible outcome *"because it should be quite a powerful support tool, and this is where especially the solution-focused and positivity has been a useful tool"*.

Other participants reflected on how they saw their solution-focused supervision related to the management of a stress reaction. The participants expressed how, if they had been feeling very stressed or pressed, they would bring it to solution-focused supervision, because it remained a risk factor for their work. Two participants highlighted how they thought solution-focused supervision had a distinct useful function in their stress management. One participant described how she used solution-focused supervision to keep herself on track regarding stress and coping. Talking about stress management and coping in supervision, gave her an indicator and a possibility to figure out whether she had a higher stress level than normal, and then be able to do what she needed to do. She stated that she considered one of the great things about a solution-focused approach in supervision that she just needed to be reminded of what she should keep on doing to take care of herself.

Another participant described it like this: *"I think that there is a place for solution-focused*

supervision if you are getting stressed and overworked, as most mental health people in Christchurch are. Then being able to just unload in supervision is probably not a bad thing". This statement is related to the occurrence of several severe earthquake incidents in Christchurch.

In the interviews, when we talked about stress management, several participants reflected on the usefulness of solution-focused supervision regarding their needs and obligations as a counselling practitioner to take care of themselves. One of the participants expressed how she felt cared for: *"I just love it, because I do not get a lot of chance in life to just have the focus on me. I feel very cared for"*. I have several notes in my own reflective journal with similar descriptions of leaving solution-focused supervision *"with a smile"* and *"a feeling of having been taken care of"*. One of the participants commented that the solution-focused supervision helped her keep her integrity and how talking about her stressors, and why she needed to manage them, was helpful and the way that she used the supervisor as a tool to support her self-management.

As mentioned in the introduction, the issues concerning how solution-focused supervision potentially affected the counsellors' perception of stress, compassion fatigue, and burn-out were part of my motivation for undertaking this study. In my analysis process, I have been mindful that when the participants mentioned those issues in the interviews, I showed significant interest to what they were saying and thereby I have influenced the emphasis the participants were devoting to this issue.

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Safety.

The element of safety in counselling and in counselling supervision includes both safety for the client as an essential part of the professions responsibility and code of ethics, and also include an element of personal and emotional safety for the counsellor. The participants in my study described the factors of enhanced safety for the clients as a key element in solution-focused

supervision, and maybe the most important reason for having supervision. One participant described how the monitoring aspect was important to provide safety:

Almost like having a person monitoring it a little bit too, so, in that respect, the employer and the clients were getting some safety which of course is part of the reason why we do supervision.

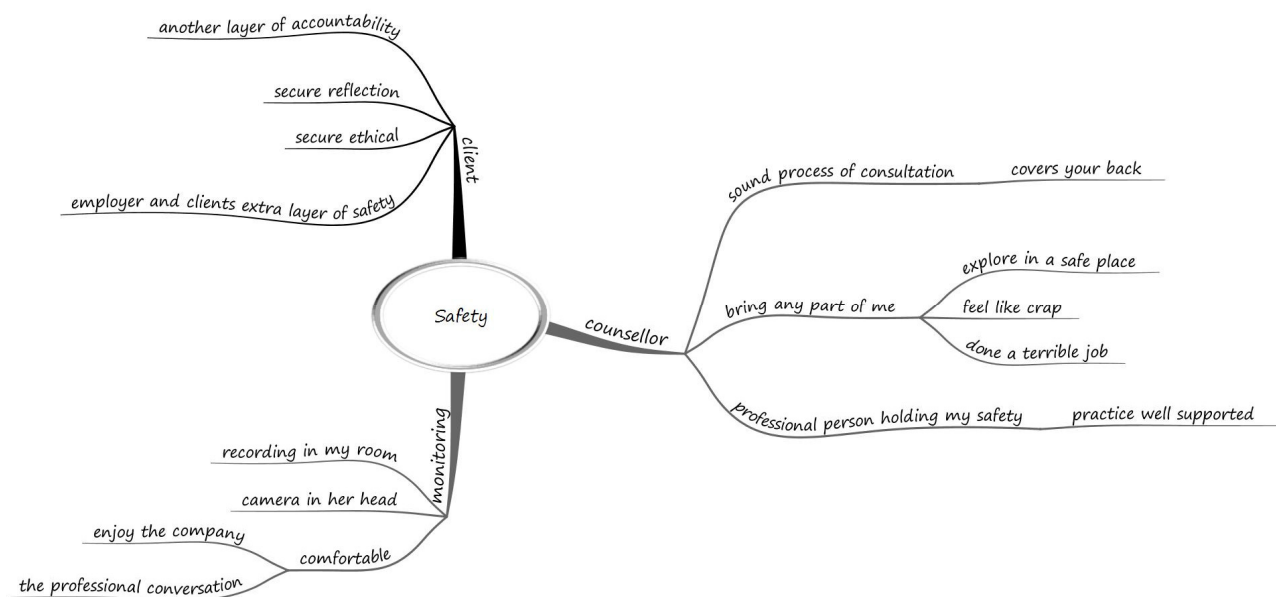


Figure 20: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Safety

They highlighted how solution-focused supervision enhanced good practice, secured reflective, and ethical practice, and thereby put in another layer of accountability. One of the participants described the solution-focused supervision sessions as a safety check on her and how it worked almost “*like her recording in my room*”. The same participant described how in her supervision sessions, she preferred to talk about counselling cases while her supervisor was, as she would say it to her, “*sitting there almost with sort of a camera in your head and making sure you*

are happy about what you hear". She highlighted how the supervisors' monitoring role in supervision was crucial for herself to feel safe in her professional practice.

In the interview, I asked one of the participants what difference her solution-focused supervision made in terms of the safety aspect of counselling work. She replied:

It does provide, through discussing cases, more options. There are learning experiences. It does provide safety and accountability, so the fact that I am being monitored to some degree by a supervisor gives my employer and the clients an extra layer of safety.

Two of the participants highlighted the factor of consulting with their supervisor in cases where risks had been identified and how a sound process of consultation could provide a feeling of safety for the practising counsellor. One of them highlighted that supervision could "*cover your back sometimes*". I have several similar statements in my own reflective journal after sessions of solution-focused supervision of "*feeling much more secure and confident*" regarding cases from my counselling work with identified risk. In the section about what issues the counsellors brought into solution-focused supervision, I return to more reflections on cases identified with a high level of risk.

The participants described how solution-focused supervision also was a safe place for them as professionals, where they could explore important issues and respond to those issues in a safe environment. One of the counsellors described how a good relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee was comfortable and safe, finding that those two terms were closely connected by enjoying the supervisor's company and the professional conversation and thus creating a feeling of safety.

It feels like my practice is well supported and that I have a professional person who is holding my safety in a way. So that I know that I can go to them and bring any part of myself

even if I am feeling like crap or I am feeling like I have done a terrible job. Somewhere I can be safe to explore those things.

In my research journal, I have reflections where I wondered whether the participants' emphasis on safety and being monitored, despite their level of experience, could be a result of their high level of professionalism and ethical awareness which was very evident in the interviews especially when we talked about their clients.

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Good practice.

One of the other elements that the participants emphasised when they reflected on their solution-focused supervision was that supervision influenced their ability to maintain good counselling practice. The participants described how they perceived that solution-focused supervision helped them maintain a good perspective of themselves and helped them to perform well as professionals.

The participants described how solution-focused supervision supported them to ensure good practice by reminding them of their counselling skills, developing and enhancing their level of confidence, and gave them a feeling of “*being at ease*” and “*more certain*”. One of the participants described how solution-focused supervision made it more transparent for her what she was trying to do in her client work, and how, when she was affirmed in what was already successful, solution-focused supervision provided a helpful framework for her to move on from. Another participant explained how she felt helped to see how and when she managed well and got “*a better idea of what skills to use*”. A third participant described the influence of solution-focused supervision on her next counselling session:

I guess I go into the next session with a sense that I know how to get it right, how to make a difference.

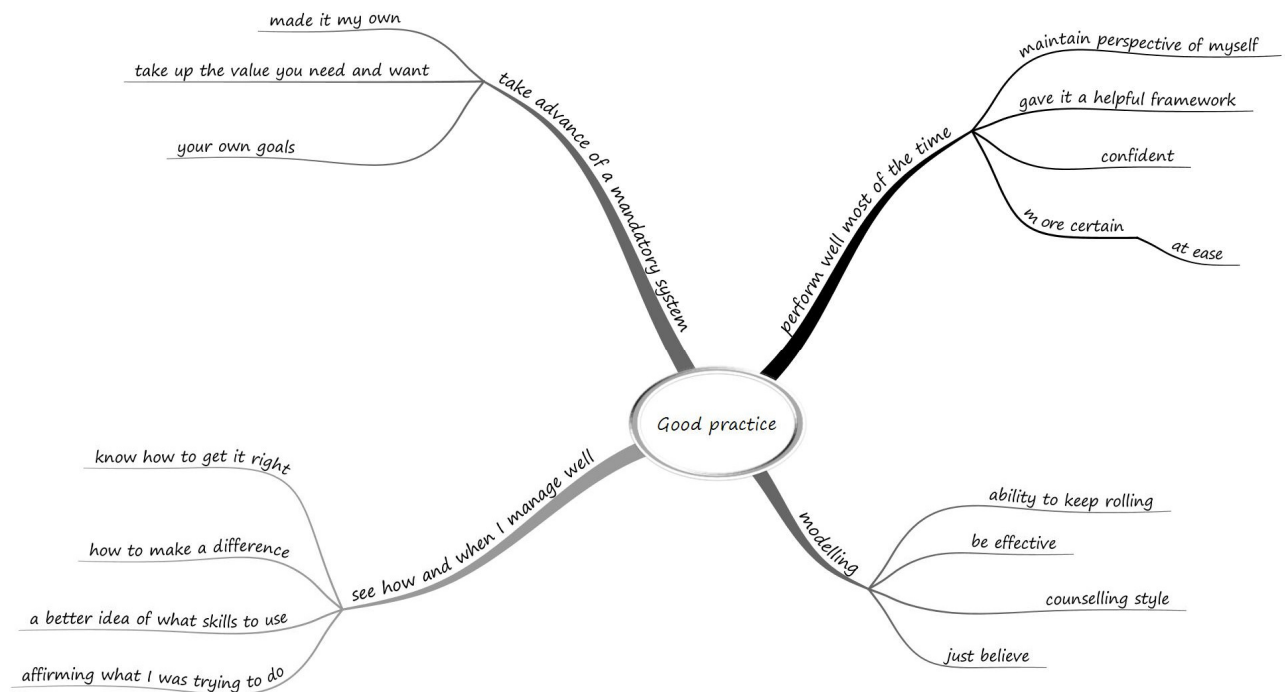


Figure 21: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Good practice

One participant described how she had “*taken advantage of a mandatory system*”, and made it her own. She emphasised how the solution-focused stance made it possible for her to base the supervision on her values, as she preferred to do, and to focus on her goals: “*I love it because it is not the old school of power against power or activist sort of style*”.

Three participants described how good counselling practice was enhanced through the modelling of the supervisor’s style and use of solution-focused questions and techniques: “*The modelling is really important*”. One participant reflected on how and to what extent her counselling work was influenced by her solution-focused supervisors. She described both of her supervisors as very gentle, reframing positively, strength-based, genuinely believing in people as being resourceful and able to change, and how that came through in her own counselling work and she believed, that

was fostered by her supervisors. “*They believe in me, and so it just gets passed on*”. Another participant reflected on the influence of solution-focused supervision on her counselling work being aware of her own dedication to the solution-focused approach:

I would definitely hold on to the solution-focused way, no question about that, so in terms of my passion for the approach that would not change without my supervisor, but my ability to keep rolling and being as effective as I can be, would be diminished if I did not have one like her.

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Effect on clients and colleagues.

My study did not intend to explore the effect of solution-focused supervision on clients, but the participants presented some significant reflections and remarks on how solution-focused supervision seemed to be able to influence their clients, and similarly their colleagues. I have chosen to include these reflections in my findings partly to elaborate the role of solution-focused supervision and partly because it is an undeveloped field of research on solution-focused supervision and on clinical supervision generally. I will return to this in my discussion of the findings.

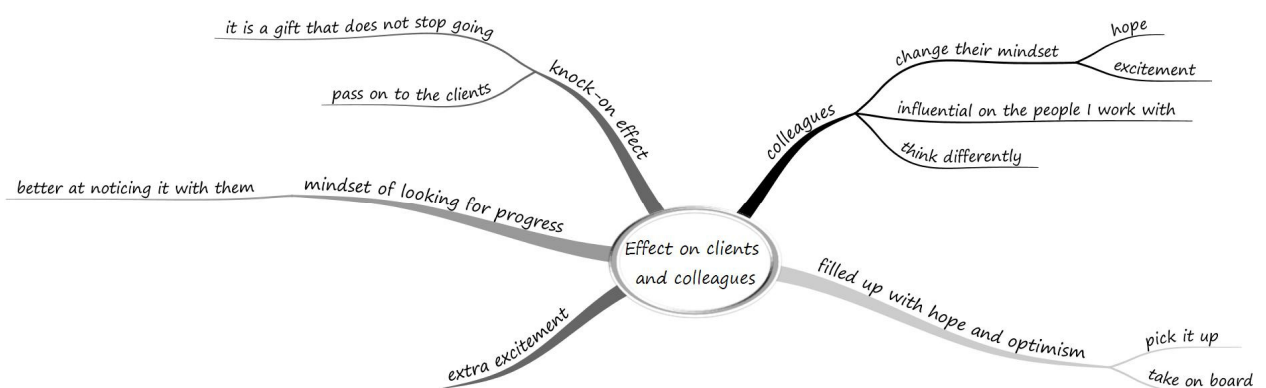


Figure 22: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Effect on clients and colleagues

Two participants described how they were aware of how what happened in solution-focused supervision directly affected their client work and thus their clients. One participant described how solution-focused supervision got her *“in the mindset of looking for progress”*, and described how that helped her get better at helping the clients to notice their progress. One participant described how solution-focused supervision gave her extra excitement to go into the counselling sessions *“filled up with hope and optimism”*, which she was sure the clients would know and could *“pick up and take on board themselves”*. She said, *“I think it is just a knock-on effect of what she gives me, I can then pass it on to the clients, so it is a gift that does not stop going”*.

One of the participants enthusiastically explained how she influenced her colleagues and other professionals in her work setting by asking solution-focused questions, which her supervisor had asked her, and she saw an—for her—unquestionable positive effect of those questions. She also noted that the same thing happened with friends and family:

It is really influential on the people I work with; it just shifts their mindset. I often get an ability to even in casual conversation just start to shift their mindset a little bit, if I can help them to think differently. I love that it makes sense because it will make them more hopeful and more excited.

The role of solution-focused supervision – Category F: Learning.

The participants highlighted the role of learning and increasing knowledge in solution-focused supervision. All of the participants described how they appreciated learning from their solution-focused supervisors both based on the supervisors counselling experience and more technical knowledge obtained by the supervisor. It could be fine aspects of the law or relevant

readings. They also reflected on their learning from receiving advice, ideas, or suggestions from their supervisor.

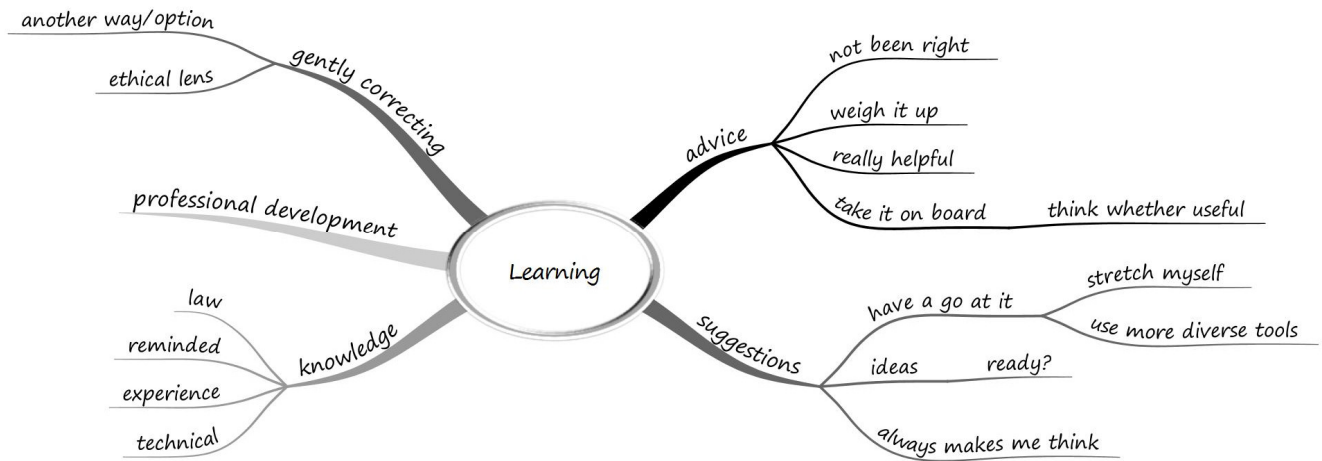


Figure 23: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category F: Learning

One of the participants described how getting suggestions from solution-focused supervision might encourage her to stretch herself more and not just keep to what was known, safe and predictable for her and thus provide her with “*more diverse tools*”. Another participant described it like this: “*Sometimes gently correcting me where she is thinking: I do not know whether that is such a great idea. What would happen? What about this? Correction or another way, perhaps, another option of dealing with it*”. One participant emphasised the importance that her supervisor always framed their conversation in the wording of the Code of Ethics and had a “*strong ethical lens for everything*” and therefore sometimes questioned, what she said or did.

The participants explained that they always made up their own mind, whether to use the advice or not with awareness to that the supervisor did not have the same level of information, as they as counsellor had. One of them remembered that there had been “*once or twice, that I have followed her advice where it has not worked so well. Now I take it on board and think about whether it is useful*”. Another participant explained:

“Sometimes she will give me ideas, and I will say: ‘I do not know if I am ready ... if the clients are ready for that’. I am not just doing everything that she suggests, but she always makes me think”.

In my research journal, I wondered about those statements about getting advice and suggestions from the supervisor. *“I wonder where their emphasis on getting advice and suggestions from the supervisor comes from? Is it something from other modalities than a solution-focused approach?”* It was not only the participants with supervisors working from integrated approaches that mention the element of getting advice, and I will return to my reflections on this in the discussion of the findings.

Summary of theme three: The role of solution-focused supervision.

One of the participants summed up the role of solution-focused supervision, the way she saw it, like this: *“Coaching, mentoring, cheering me on, teaching at times, reflecting, evaluating”.*

The participants described the central role of solution-focused supervision as support, sharing and reflection, awareness of emotional responses and self-care, safety and good practice, continual professional learning.

The way the participants described a distinct feeling of being able to share both challenges and successes with their solution-focused supervisor was significant. They also reflected on the importance of being able to discuss an emotional response to their client work and the influence of that with their supervisor. They described how the solution-focused supervision helped them to manage challenging cases, recover faster, and more efficiently.

The participants expressed how consulting cases identified with a high level of risk with the supervisor could make them feel safe and more confident.

It was noticeable how the participants described that they saw solution-focused supervision helping them to maintain effective practice, and gave them confidence by reminding them about their counselling skills. The element of being reminded was a recurrent expression from the participants throughout my research.

The participants also talked about how, what they experienced in their solution-focused supervision sessions, were transferred to their work with clients and colleagues. The phrasing “*it just gets passed on*” and “*a gift that does not stop going*” made me wonder if that could be an indicator of an influence of a solution-focused approach rolling from the solution-focused supervisor into the counsellor and then to their clients.

Theme Four: The Content of Solution-focused Supervision

In my analysis of the data, I noticed patterns in the issues or content that the participants described they chose to bring to their solution-focused supervision sessions and I found that this theme could support the illustration of how solution-focused supervision was used and how it meets the need for supervision for experienced counsellors.

All of the participants described how they set the agenda for the solution-focused supervision sessions and ensured that the sessions were useful for them. One participant elaborated how being able to decide in what way to use her solution-focused supervision gave her a sense of agency, control, and having a voice, and appreciated the freedom to negotiate with her supervisor about what was important in her supervision.

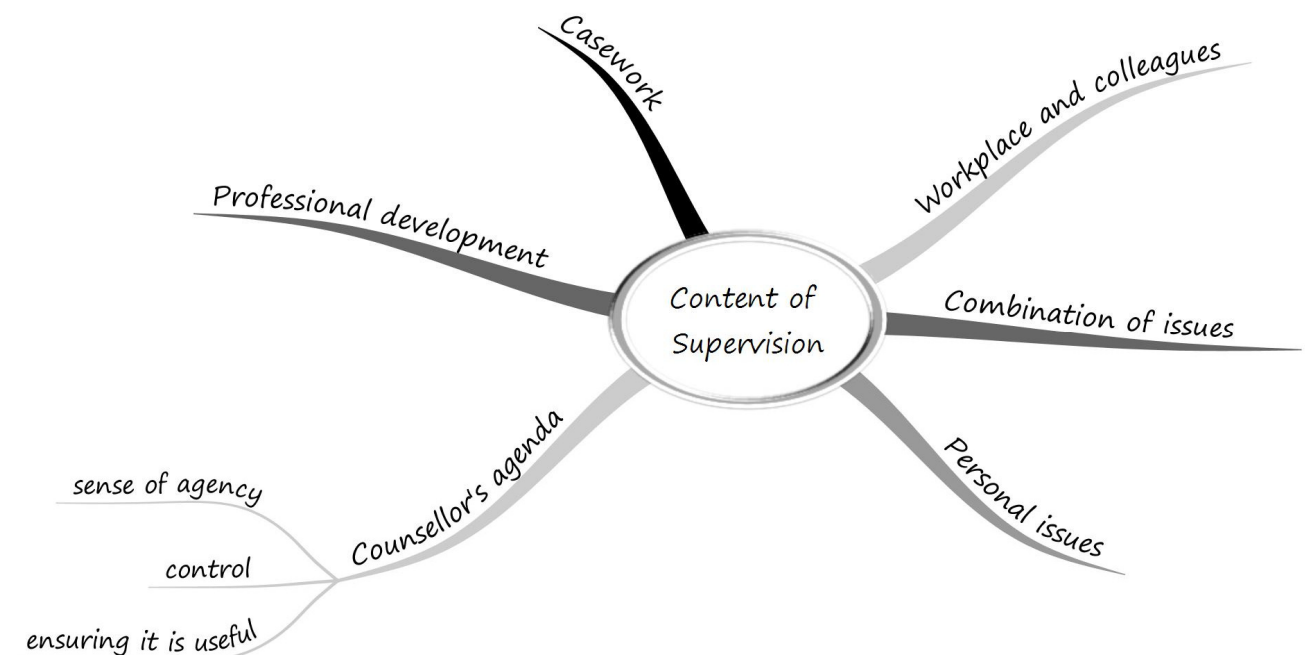


Figure 24: Theme 4: The Content of Solution-focused Supervision

The content of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Combination of issues.

All of the participants described that the content of their solution-focused supervision sessions often had the nature of “*covering the ground*” of what was going on in their professional practice and in their lives and thus a mixture of issues from client work, workplace challenges, and more personal matters.

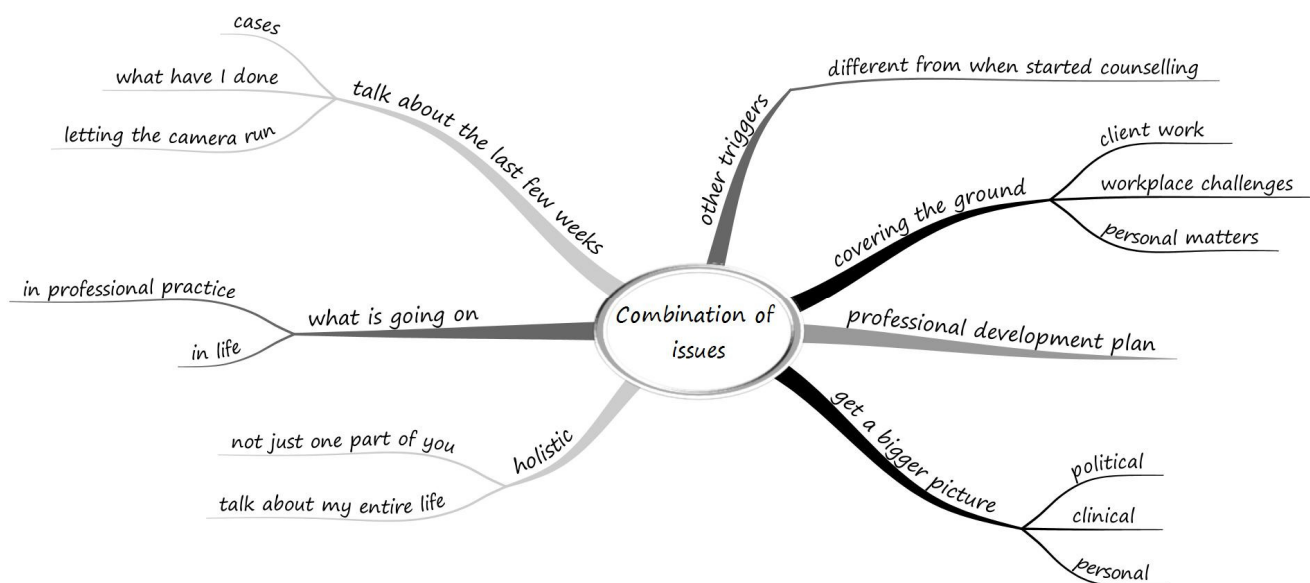


Figure 25: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Combination of issues

One participant explained how the combination of issues offered a holistic supervision session, talking about dynamics with teamwork, actual client work, and things affecting her privately. For her, it made sense that not just one part of her life but her entire life was talked about in solution-focused supervision. This point of view was supported by another participant: “*I kind of have in my mind always there is a bit of personal, a bit of client work and a bit of team-stuff*”. One participant described how a typical solution-focused supervision session was to talk about the last few weeks and what had been going on, just talking and “*letting that camera run*”. Two of the counsellors described how their solution-focused supervision sessions often helped them get a

bigger picture of what was going on in their professional practice. They described how the issues brought to solution-focused supervision could have a wide parameter and move from political, to clinical, and to personal issues within one session, and how the content of supervision could change from session to session.

We had just completed the professional development plan, and this was not part of that plan, prior to the professional development plan we have been working on other things, so we had actually moved quite a bit over three supervision sessions.

One of the participants reflected on whether she brought different content to her solution-focused supervision after becoming more experienced. She exemplified how, when she started counselling, she would bring all of her casework and that there was now less casework that she struggled with. As she gained more experience, she became aware of other “triggers” which presented more learning for her now: *“It is sort of in a different place”*.

The content of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Casework.

The participants described that they usually brought specific cases from their work to a solution-focused supervision session, such as cases that they either needed support with or wanted to discuss and reflect on together with their supervisor.

All six participants mentioned how they routinely brought casework involving risk factors and how their supervisor expected them to bring any client at risk to supervision. One of them expressed it like this: *“I always take safety stuff, so if I am concerned about a client, I assure that my supervisor is aware of that even if I think, I have attended to what I need to do”*.

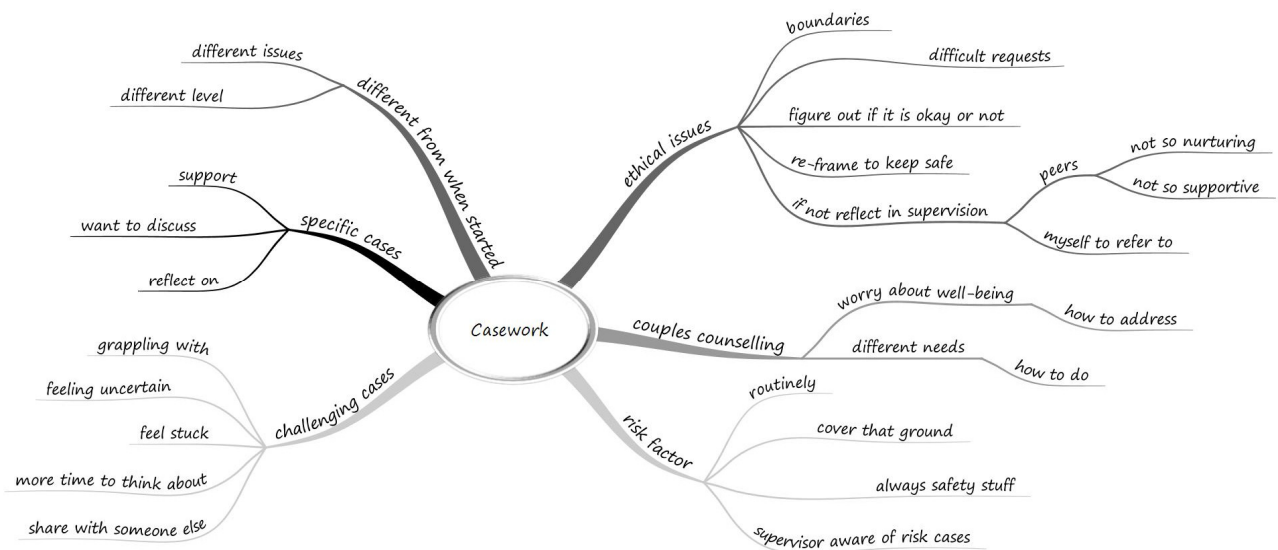


Figure 26: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Casework

Two participants described bringing cases that challenged them somehow, cases they were “grappling” with, where they felt uncertain or stuck, or cases they wanted more time to reflect on together with the solution-focused supervisor. One participant exemplified this by describing a case with a couple she had brought to solution-focused supervision recently. Together with the supervisor, she had explored how to be even-handed when one of the clients’ needs was different and how she could address a worry about one of the clients’ wellbeing in the couple counselling session.

One participant described how she would bring more ethical issues:

Sometimes I am bringing issues around boundaries, say if an ex-colleague requested a counselling session with me, so I am changing a role. Or someone I know from another setting asked me to do some work with them and problems with their son. That sort of different requests I do take to supervision to sort of figuring out, if it feels okay or not okay, and do I have to re-frame it to keep it safe.

The content of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Workplace and colleagues.

The participants agreed that bringing issues from their workplace into supervision was important and was a frequent topic of discussion under their solution-focused supervision. The participants described how they would talk about the workplace, the management politics, and how the management of the workplace affected their counselling role, emphasising the importance of whether they as counsellors were valued at the workplace.

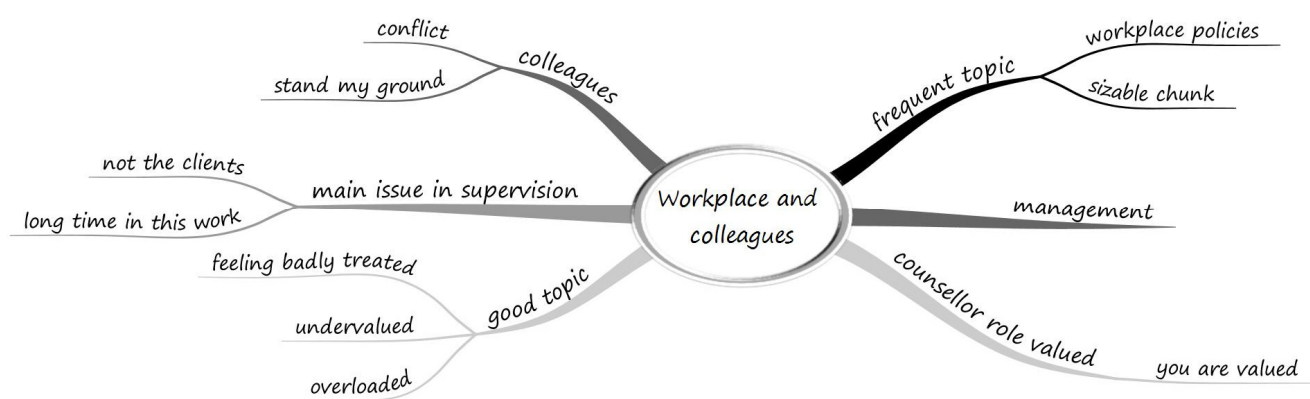


Figure 27: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Workplace and colleagues

Two participants explained that the issues from their workplace were a substantial topic, “a sizeable chunk” in their solution-focused supervision and that it might be relatively different from when they were less experienced. One of them explained: “That is where I have my main issues, not with the clients. I guess I have been in this work for a long time”.

One participant described how she had used her solution-focused supervision to figure out how to deal with a conflict with a colleague. She talked with the supervisor about these difficulties with one of her colleagues, followed the supervisor’s advice and accordingly was “able to stand my ground”.

One participant reflected on that it was an important and relevant topic for solution-focused supervision:

I think that is a good topic for supervision. Like if I were feeling badly treated or undervalued by my boss or overloaded, I would certainly take that to supervision.

The content of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Personal issues.

The participants talked about bringing issues of a more personal character into their solution-focused supervision. Their approaches to this topic differed, and each presented an individually defined point of view about whether or not to discuss such issues in supervision.

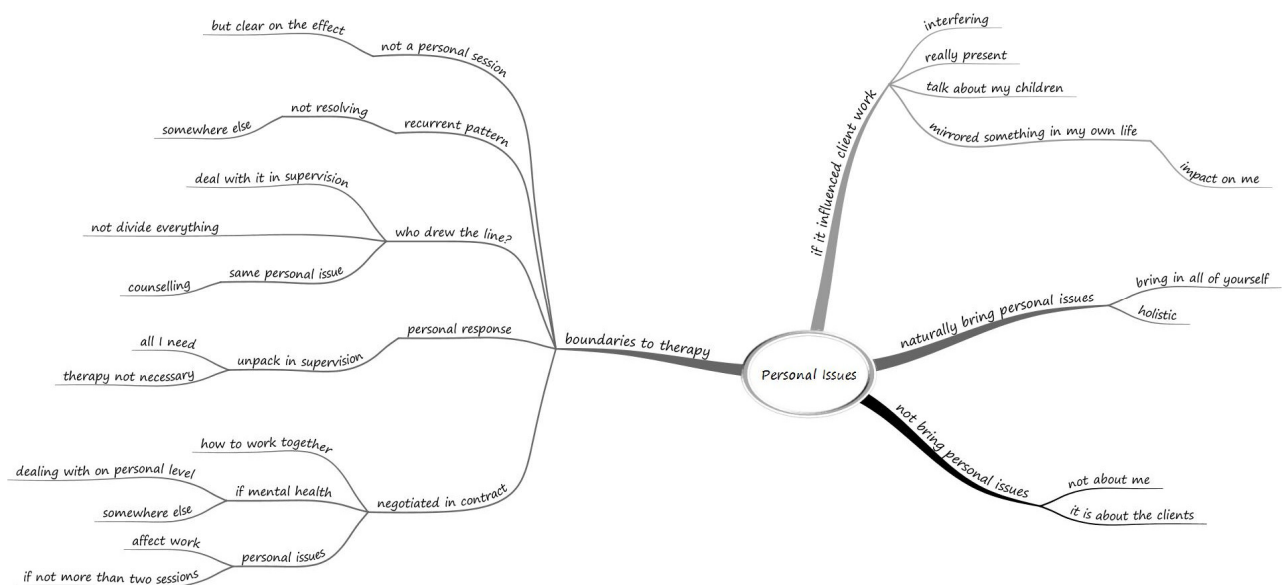


Figure 28: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Personal issues

One of the participants expressed she did not bring personal issues to solution-focused supervision: *“I think it is not about me and my issues. I think it is about the clients I work with. It is about them; it is not about me”*. Two of the participants explained that they naturally brought issues from the more personal part of their lives saying that *“you do bring in all of yourself”*. Three of the participants described how they would bring *“personal stuff”* to solution-focused supervision if they experienced going through something personally, and they acknowledged that it was or might be influencing their work with clients. One participant described that if something in her life was

interfering with her ability to focus on her work, such as issues with her children, she would take that to supervision.

There have been times, where it has been impacting on me quite a lot, and that has often been when there has been an issue with the counselling, that has kind of mirrored something in my own life, and then we have talked about that quite a bit because it has impacted on me.

In the interviews, when we talked about bringing personal issues to solution-focused supervision, all the participants reflected on how they saw the boundaries and differences between supervision and personal counselling or therapy. They described how that if it became “*a recurrent pattern and not resolved quickly*”, they would be happy to take it somewhere else to a personal counselling session. They emphasised that when a personal response occurred towards something at work, and it was possible to “*unpack*” it in a solution-focused supervision session, that would often be all they needed to do, and it would not necessarily be an ongoing issue for them. One of them explained it like this:

I would not make the session a personal session, but if there are personal things that are coming up, then I would typically make sure that I am clear on the effect.

Two participants described how the boundaries between supervision and personal counselling had been negotiated between them and the supervisor, and they found it a natural element in their contract about how to work together in solution-focused supervision. One of them described how they had written in the supervision contract that any sort of mental health or personal issues faced by the supervisee was open for discussion because it might affect the counselling work, but that the supervision was not for dealing with those issues on a personal level. The other

participant described how she appreciated having a supervisor with the rule, that if “*personal stuff*” was coming up in more than two sessions, it was a good indication that the supervisee needed to take that issue to a therapy session.

Three of the participants had a supplementary role as a supervisor, and one of them considered how her thoughts of the boundaries between supervision and counselling originated from the relationship with her own supervisor.

It is interesting because I had a conversation with my supervisor about my supervisees and one of the questions I asked her was, “When does it become counselling and when is it supervision?” and she said, “Who drew that line?” I said, “I am really pleased to hear you say that because I just do not feel that I have got that line with her,” but she said, “Look, if you had come three times to a session with me and it was the same personal issue, then I would say, ‘Go get some counselling,’ but until that happens, we can deal with it in supervision”. I just really like that approach when you do not have to divide everything.

The content of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Professional development.

I asked the participants how they saw solution-focused supervision having a role in or how solution-focused supervision was connected to professional development. The counsellors described that from their point of view solution-focused supervision was a vital component of their long-term professional development as a counsellor. One of them explained how she had done lots of training and courses over her many years of working as a counsellor, but saw them as “*one-off activities*”. She highlighted that over the years her solution-focused supervision would be the most consistent source of professional development.

One participant assessed solution-focused supervision to be a professional development tool because cases were discussed and the counsellor was getting ideas of how to deal with the situation

more effectively or got a wider range of choices to take back into the casework. This participant described how that could also come from training and courses but appointed that “*supervision is professional development*”.

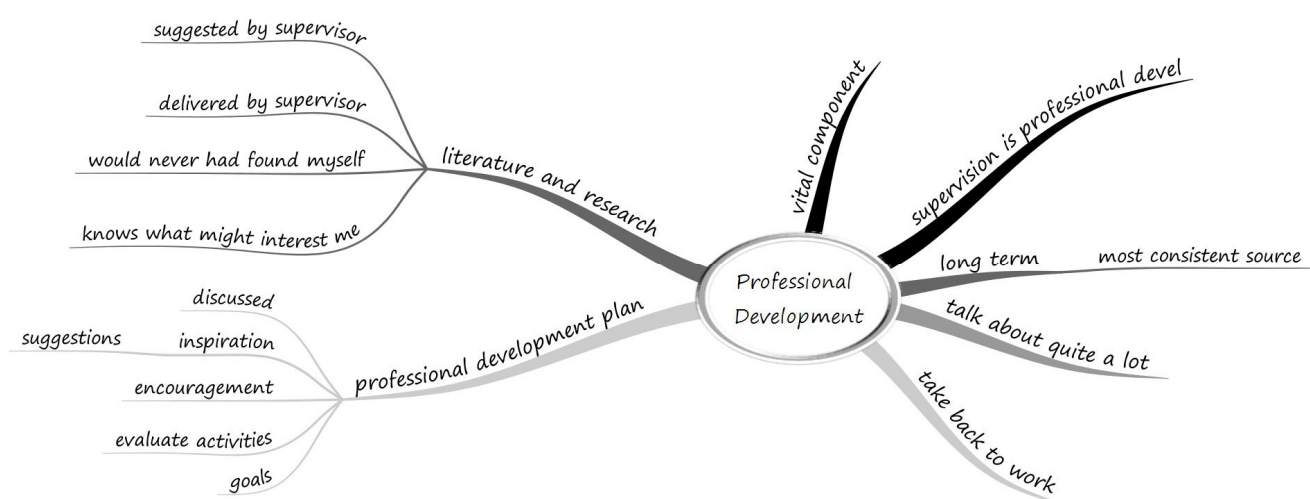


Figure 29: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Professional development

The participants illustrated how their plans and goals for professional development were shared and discussed in the solution-focused supervision, and how the supervisor inspired and encouraged them to participate in developmental activities.

I do talk about the things that I have been to professionally with her. When we set our goals for the year, we do talk about that, and then I talk about it when I have been there. She does ask the question: “How did that fit with your goals?”

Three of the participants explained how their supervisor contributed with material to read and study, supporting the enhancement of knowledge and professional development which is a common factor used in clinical supervision. It is noticeable that two of those three participants had supervisors using a solution-focused approach exclusively, which I will return to in my discussion.

One of these participants described how she considered it part of her professional development and ongoing learning when her supervisor brought research and other sources of knowledge “*that I would never have found by myself*”. The second participant explained it like this:

Typical of every session that I have with her, she leaves me with lots of things, I want to look up and read, or know more about, or articles and readings that she thinks would be relevant and useful for me to know. That is always a big part of my supervision, and I really appreciate that she knows what I might be interested in reading.

The third of these participants described how the supervisor would often subsequently send her written material to read based on what they had been talking about in the solution-focused supervision session.

Summary of theme four: The content of solution-focused supervision.

The participants described that they were deciding what to bring to solution-focused supervision and directed the agenda of the supervision sessions. The participants described how their solution-focused supervision encompassed a combination of different issues, often in the same session and moved from session to session. They highlighted the usefulness of being able to check-in on what was going on more generally and thereby get a bigger picture of their present professional practice. The participants discussed how they identified casework to bring to solution-focused supervision; they routinely brought cases identified with risk, normally brought cases which challenged them, and sometimes brought casework when they found it helpful to discuss the case with their supervisor for other reasons.

Workplace issues seemed to be a recurrent issue in the participants’ solution-focused supervision, and some of the counsellors expressed that they thought workplace issues weighted relatively more now than when they were less experienced.

When I analysed the participants' reflections on whether to bring more personal issues to solution-focused supervision, a pattern of individual preferences appeared. It was not possible from my findings to establish a clear or unanimous line of boundary between supervision and therapy. This topic seemed to be connected to the participants' personal values and way of understanding the world, and the participants apparently had chosen a supervisor who aligned, mirrored or acknowledged this understanding. The participants agreed that personal counselling was a natural step for them when a personal issue became recurrent in supervision. The participants also agreed that if counsellors encountered mental health issues, it would be best to deal with it outside solution-focused supervision.

Professional development was an expected part of the participants' solution-focused supervision both in getting inspiration to activities, courses and training and in evaluating the counsellor's benefit and learning from those activities. One of the participants linked her choice of supervisor to who had been willing to support her in her priorities of professional development. The solution-focused supervisors did not only offer professional learning arising from their experience and expertise but also from either delivering or recommending research and literature to the participants.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

In this chapter, I include discussion based on my exploration of solution-focused supervision and suggest implications for counsellors and solution-focused supervisors. There are a number of ethical considerations, strengths and limitations of my study, and these I also discuss. No piece of research is definitive and therefore suggestions for further research complete this discussion chapter.

Discussion of the Findings

In the first part of this discussion chapter, I will discuss the findings in conjunction with the relevant literature. The four themes are discussed separately and will be collected in a short summary.

Theme one: A solution-focused approach used in supervision.

In reflecting on their practice, the participants commented that solution-focused questions and techniques used in supervision helped them to develop more effective counselling practice and increased their awareness of the importance of language in their work with clients. This specific use of language is a significant feature of a solution-focused approach (de Shazer, 1988, 1997; Rudes, Shilts, & Berg, 1997). The participants had a clear picture of how those solution-focused questions were helpful and effective for them in their supervision by making them think and reflect. The most powerful solution-focused questions used in supervision seemed to be about their own share of the clients' progress (an indirect compliment) and questions about what else they could do. The participants described how their supervisors used the solution-focused approach of "leading from one step behind" (De Jong & Berg, 2013) and how that was helpful for them and gave them a feeling of being "*gently corrected*" or lead to new understandings (Rudes et al. (1997).

The usefulness of getting compliments and celebrating both the counsellors' and the clients' successes was evident and seen in both the way they described what they took away from solution-focused supervision and how they emphasised the importance of validation and affirmation in the supervisory relationship. Sharing and celebrating successes seemed to have the effect of strengthening their confidence and maintaining their professional identity. This solution-focused way of seeing the use of compliments as a useful tool in both counselling and in supervision, leading to positive transformations when the compliments were based on observed strengths and resources, is recognised by Berg and De Jong (2005).

One of the participants mentioned that she perceived validation as a basic human need and all the participants in my study showed how solution-focused supervision validated and affirmed them as professional practitioners mainly by focusing on what they had done well. The aspect of validation in supervision has also been described and analysed in the pilot research of West and Clark (2004). In my own contract with my solution-focused supervisor of how we should work together, I asked her to remember to validate me and focus on my skills and strengths, because I have a very forceful inner critical voice, and I was aware that I needed support to balance that. Looking at my reflective notes from solution-focused supervision, I find recurrent thoughts of feeling supported, heard, and understood. In that light, it was remarkable for me to see how the participants in my study as highly experienced counsellors described a feeling of being energised, more hopeful, taking away useful ideas for their client work, and even happy.

A lot of the recommended solution-focused supervision methods introduced by Berg and discussed by Thomas (2013) had clearly been used by the participants' solution-focused supervisors. The elements of empathy, compliments, exploring exceptions, scaling questions, support and challenge, and building a collaborative supervisory relationship are all recognisable. Listening to the participants, it became evident to me how they appreciated being "lead from one

step behind” allowing them to take responsibility for their own learning as described by Thomas (2013) and learn through interaction in a similar way as described by Rudes et al. (1997).

Some of the participants described their perception of some limitations to the solution-focused approach used in clinical supervision that highlighted supervisees’ needs for being listened to, to be allowed to explain and explore the problem and hear the issue or the topic before working on the solutions or focussing on the positives too soon. The participants had a clear picture of how to compensate for the limitations they described, through the ethical and professional obligation of being a practising counsellor to bring what is relevant, important and necessary to clinical supervision regardless of the type of supervision. This is consistent with the Code of Ethics of NZAC where it states that “Counsellors shall be responsible for: Selecting and taking to supervision relevant aspects of their work and their personal functioning” (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2016, p. 11). As one participant noted, and literature about the solution-focused approach used in supervision also has highlighted (Knight, 2004), that counsellors are more primed to talk about their problems in client work than their successes. This author describes how to approach problems in solution-focused supervision in a way that is very similar to my participants describing their needs (Knight, 2004, p. 166):

The problems cannot and should not be ignored. The supervisor has an obligation to protect the interests of clients and her or his agency. Clearly, supervisors must hold their supervisees accountable for their actions. However, attention also can be directed towards helping the supervisee identify what she or he has been doing right, so that she or he can do it more often and more deliberately.

The findings in my study also draw attention to a possible need for counsellors to gain expertise outside solution-focused supervision. Implications for counsellors and supervisors based on this part of the findings are elaborated in the discussion section in the next section.

Theme two: The supervisory relationship.

My findings showed a very significant experience of a positive supervisory relationship in the participating counsellors' solution-focused supervision. The influence of a positive supervisory relationship on effective counselling practice was highlighted in several supervision research studies (Efstation et al., 1990; Ladany et al., 2013; S. Wheeler & Richards, 2007).

The participants described a sense of having a supporter, a mentor and a muse which proposed that solution-focused supervision support their professional growth as it is also described by Ungar (2006). Two of the participants in my study mentioned that they saw their solution-focused supervisor as their "*cheerleader*", matching a description in a research paper about the use of solution-focused supervision: "Of course, we do also do our share of cheerleading, which is another way of saying that we do a lot of affirmative evaluation of therapists" (Briggs & Miller, 2005, pp. 204-205).

The role modelling in solution-focused supervision, in terms of both personal and professional style, influenced my participants' counselling style in a way that is also discussed in the literature about supervision (Jacobsen & Tanggaard, 2009), and my study showed that this might also apply to solution-focused supervision. Role modelling of the supervisor's behaviour, attitude and values in the supervisory relationship seemingly affected the supervisee's way of doing their professional practice which was also seen in other supervision research (Barnett & Molzon, 2014).

The participants in my study had chosen their supervisor based on a range of different motives, and the choice of supervisor seemed to be an essential element in establishing a good supervisory relationship, an element also seen in other research (Lawton, 2000). The participants had chosen their supervisor mainly based on their workload or on more personal needs and preferred style. They had also made considerations about gender in their choice of a supervisor but similar to other research (Lawton, 2000) they did not see it as the main factor.

It was noticeable that the participants in my study emphasised the importance of the supervisor's level of experience, professionalism and specialist knowledge, similar to that described by Lawton (2000, p. 33), who writes that "idealisation of the supervisor was common". A facet in the findings which especially surprised me—because of the extensive experience of the participants—was their vision of the supervisor as a person that they wished to develop to be like both professionally and personally. My study might thus presuppose that there is no change in the critical components in the supervisory relationship despite the extent of the participants' experience. This argument could be supported by research from Rønnestad and Skovholt (2001) who interviewed 12 senior counsellors and described that their participants had a significant positive perception of the professional elders and how that, over time, had affected practice with deep internalisation. Other research suggested the same: "Different experience levels of supervisee do not necessarily require different types of relationships with their supervisors" (Renfro-Michel & Sheperis, 2009, p. 152).

The longevity of the supervisory relationship seen in my study could potentially be an indication of the perceived importance of the relationship and of the supervisor's influence on the counsellor's professional development over the years. The comfort of the relationship could also make them reluctant to shift; wanting to stay in a known and safe relationship (Lawton (2000)).

The participants in my study described how they experienced a high level of trust, honesty and freedom to disclose difficult issues and highlighted the importance of support. The solution-focused supervisors' support seemed to stretch beyond mentoring, and they took a personal interest in the supervisee's professional development, which fostered a more collaborative and reciprocal relationship, similar issues are stated in literature such as Barnett and Molzon (2014) and Johnson (2007). One participant, who had just gone through a major transition, described how she used her solution-focused supervisor to support her navigating in that new setting. S. Wheeler and Richards (2007), who conducted a systematic review of the literature on the impact of supervision on experienced counsellors, stated that when a supervisee felt supported it seemed to be a result of supervision that was honouring and focusing on the importance of the good relationship.

One of the participants mentioned that her supervisor had energy, enthusiasm, and hope which could demonstrate a connection to the use of the solution-focused approach, as described by Pichot (2005, p. 279) "I am struck by the emotionally energizing nature of using this approach as a supervisor".

Theme three: The role of solution-focused supervision.

The way the participants saw the role of solution-focused supervision showed how some of the needs for clinical supervision were met. The elements of securing safe, ethical, and effective practice were apparently fulfilled, with the participants describing how their solution-focused supervisor monitored their work, and the emphasis they put on the safety and ethical element. The participants' best hopes from solution-focused supervision of being safe practitioners thus seemed to be mainly satisfied. My analysis of the emphasis that the participants put on the element of safety, lead me to consider how come extensively experienced counsellors apparently valued the aspect of being monitored; as one described it, having a "*camera in her head*" so much. It is not

easy to find literature about how solution-focused supervision addresses the aspect of being monitored. An article addressing trainee counsellors notes: “Of course, counselors in supervision have deficits that monitoring can identify and that training can address” (Presbury et al., 1999) but they also highlight the importance of focussing on the supervisee’s potential development. The monitoring in solution-focused supervision, as it was described by my participants, seemed to be a desired and wanted tool for themselves to feel safe and to initiate important discussions much more than a hierarchical and evaluating type of monitoring. There did not seem to be any significant difference in how the experienced counsellors in my study understood the safety element in supervision and what literature had found generally important in clinical supervision (Campbell, 2000; Watkins & Milne, 2014). For both my participants and for counsellors reported in the literature (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009), supervision was essential to protect client safety and to secure the quality of their counselling.

I noticed that the participants seemed to appreciate getting advice and suggestions from their supervisor and I wonder how that could be connected to solution-focused supervision. Lowe and Guy (2002, p. 151) explain that they “believe it is not inconsistent with the model to offer relevant ideas, reactions, comments and suggestions” while these are recommended to be offered in a way that is consistent with a solution-focused approach to supervision; largely by being inquisitive. The participants described how their supervisors provided suggestions and feedback as a contribution to the conversation in the solution-focused supervision sessions, which correlates with the description of solution-focused supervision by Lowe and Guy (2002, p. 145) “It is expertise without ‘The Expert’”. This is supported by other literature such as Briggs and Miller (2005, p. 217) stating: “Sometimes therapists (like clients in therapy) ask their supervisors to provide expert observations and suggestions about some issues. We have likely been selected and sought out by the therapists we supervise because of this expertise”. The participants articulated how they make up their mind

whether to use advice and suggestions given by the supervisor or not and I wonder if that was an indicator of their extensive experience as counsellors, in the way they show agency and autonomy, confidence in their abilities, and self-belief in their skilfulness. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) researched in counsellor development and identified six phases of professional development. Their research showed that experienced counsellors could be authentic in combining the counselling role with personal values and be flexible in their use of counselling methods and techniques (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992, 2003). The components of fostering learning and professional development seemed to be met with the participants' description of how they learned and benefited from the solution-focused supervisor's experience and expertise.

In the findings, the participants highlighted the importance of solution-focused supervision as a safe place for them as professional practitioners to talk confidentially and openly about difficult situations, and solution-focused supervision seemed to be able to meet the needs and expressed best hopes for having a place to be able to talk confidentially. Similar results of a need to feel safe in the supervisory relationship were found in research (Weeks, 2002) identifying it as a factor that experienced counsellors in Scotland perceived as being one of the most important elements in good supervision.

Another of the participants' best hopes from solution-focused supervision was to be able to vent frustrations without indulging in the response, and in the described findings, the participants expressed a significant feeling of having a space for sharing emotions and issues without being judged, conversely being supported in how to deal with those feelings, emotions, and issues. Literature about a solution-focused approach used in supervision has described how supervisees can need assistance to reframe their work in situations that could be challenging: "This is particularly helpful in instances in which they feel overwhelmed and confused." (Knight, 2004, p. 169).

The restorative element in supervision also seemed to be contained in their reflections on how their solution-focused supervision took care of the needs to talk about emotional responses and stress management and settled well with their best hopes of preventing burn-out and living a balanced life. Research on how to prevent burn-out, compassion fatigue and stress among counsellors supported this idea (Baker, 2003; Kovač et al., 2016; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Although it would require further research into this topic to determine if solution-focused supervision could have a decisive role in that context, the participants' statements about feeling energised, excited, and hopeful suggest that it is a possibility.

The participants described their solution-focused supervision as an opportunity to think, talk things through and "*bounce thoughts*", and thus indicated how they saw solution-focused supervision as having a reflective role for them. That supervision is a place for reflection is a recurring feature in supervision literature (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). One of the best hopes expressed by the participants was to keep reflecting, and these findings showed that solution-focused supervision could possibly realise that.

The supportive role of solution-focused supervision was noted by all of the participants. The need for support and encouragement, as described by the participants, could be a sign of affirmation seeking, an occurrence that Weaks (2002) also found in her research, where a feeling of being understood and affirmed was connected to the positive supervisory relationship.

As mentioned in the findings, I found it noticeable that the participants talked about how what they experienced in their solution-focused supervision sessions was transferred to their work with clients and colleagues and that they experienced an effect not only in their work but also on their clients. Triantafillou (1997) has in his pilot study shown positive client outcome of solution-focused supervision and further research on this topic could be beneficial and recommendable. Research about such processes in supervision (Barnett & Molzon, 2014) showed that a supervisee

presumably incorporated the qualities of the supervisor and emulated them in the relationships with clients and in the professional practice more generally.

Theme four: The content of solution-focused supervision.

It is significant that the participants in my study described that they were directing the agenda of the solution-focused supervision sessions because, in doing so, they were showing one of the distinct features of solution-focused supervision; the shared responsibility and non-hierarchic relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor that gives the supervisees the agency of being the experts of their situation and working from the supervisees' goals (Thomas, 1994, 2013). This could also concurrently be a result of a high level of autonomy of experienced counsellors (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992).

It was evident that the participants chose to bring issues to their solution-focused supervision that potentially could meet their needs of clinical supervision. To secure a safe, ethical and effective professional practice, the participants regularly brought casework and routinely cases identified with risk. Researchers have noticed that even experienced counsellors can struggle with doubt and insecurity (Bradley & Ladany, 2001) and the trust and openness that was present in the solution-focused supervisory relationship, as described in Theme two, seemed to make it possible for the participants to bring such issues to solution-focused supervision. A solution-focused approach to supervision does not try to diminish such struggles or difficulties but, with attention to the supervisee's goals, focusses on past successes and the skills and resources of the supervisee (Lowe & Guy, 2002).

The way the participants deliberately and regularly used conversations in their solution-focused supervision sessions to support their choices of professional development, and additionally the ways their supervisors shared experience and knowledge of literature and research showed how

solution-focused supervision seemed to be able to include learning and professional growth, essential elements of all clinical supervision as described by Morgan and Sprenkle (2007). I wonder if the fact that two out of the three participants who particularly mentioned this element had a supervisor exclusively using a solution-focused approach, could be related to the collaborative nature of solution-focused supervision practice. One of those participants described her solution-focused supervision as “*a meeting of minds*” which could indicate a rationale for this argument.

Some of the participants discussed a change in both the cases they brought to solution-focused supervision and a different depth in the conversations and supervisory consultation from what they brought when they were less experienced. Most of the counsellors expressed awareness that other issues, such as challenges and relationships from their workplaces, might be a more dominant element in their supervision now they had become more experienced.

The participants’ reflections about if, when, and how to bring personal issues to solution-focused supervision showed the presence of the restorative element in solution-focused supervision but also highlighted the level of reflexivity and self-awareness of the experienced counsellors participating in this study. This might be supported by research on experienced counsellors and therapists which showed a high level of self-awareness, emotional maturity, and strength of character (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999).

Summary of the discussion of the findings.

Supervision based on a solution-focused approach can, according to the results of this study, have a valuable role in meeting the needs of experienced counsellors of securing safe and effective professional counselling practice and supplying restorative support. This study also suggests that solution-focused supervision can be a useful resource for ongoing growth and professional development. The influence of the positive and collaborative supervisory relationship stands out,

and the participants' detailed description of how a solution-focused approach was used in their supervision provides an illustration of how solution-focused supervision can be useful for experienced counsellors and their practice. This study directs attention towards the effect of solution-focused supervision on client outcome and whether solution-focused supervision can be a resource in preventing burn-out and stress.

Learning for Counsellors and Solution-focused Supervisors

The findings from this study can inform counsellors who reflect on their clinical supervision to consider how they secure helpful and effective supervision by clarifying their choices about what to bring to supervision, and how they might make their supervision work best for them. Its findings will inform solution-focused supervisors both about what was considered essential for the participating supervisees, and how they can assist their supervisees to reach their best hopes of being effective, safe, and ethical practitioners by mentoring, supporting and validating, and focussing on the supervisees' skills, strengths, and resources.

The participants in my study described experiences from solution-focused supervision that aligned those described in other studies on supervision (Efstation et al., 1990; Ladany et al., 2013; Stoltenberg et al., 1994; Weeks, 2002; Worthen & McNeill, 1996) that highly appraised the value of a good, equal, and collaborative supervisory relationship. The findings of this study highlight the importance of this relationship for the effectiveness of solution-focused supervision.

From a critical perspective, this study highlighted the importance of being aware of the potential limitations of solution-focused supervision. Based on the perceptions of limitations described by participants, it is important that solution-focused supervisors consider the supervisee's needs for talking about and allowing space for defining the challenges and problems. The participants in this study apparently also appreciated more awareness in solution-focused supervision of the elements of how to expand specialised counselling expertise.

Implications for Clinical Counselling Supervision

Although the participants in this study had similarities in their counselling modality, given that they were all either using the solution-focused approach exclusively or largely in their

counselling practice, they showed variety in clientele and employment setting, and demonstrated a robust individual attitude and rationale for how they chose to use their solution-focused supervision.

My study showed that in their solution-focused supervision, these participating experienced counsellors from New Zealand had a high focus on support and professional development. Solution-focused supervision might also provide a safe and useful frame for their wellbeing and continuing professional growth. Research from the UK, where, as in New Zealand, clinical supervision for counsellors is highly valued and supported by the counsellors' professional associations, describes a positive assessment of the benefits of supervision when "the supportive and developmental nature of counselling supervision, where the supervisee experiences the process as one which sustains him or her both emotionally and intellectually and which thereby creates an implicit challenge to future working" (Mearns, 1995, p. 421). Given that my study provided a portrait of the use of solution-focused supervision in a setting where frequent clinical counsellor supervision is professionally highly valued, the findings may also be useful to professional counselling bodies and associations in other countries with current less emphasis on the importance of supervision for experienced practitioners.

Ethics, Strengths, and Limitations of This Study

Ethical considerations.

The six participants in this study are largely well-known members of the counselling community in New Zealand, and because of the limited number of solution-focused counsellors and the risk that the participants and their supervisors could easily be recognised, I had to protect their privacy and discretion. Some parts of the available data material were excluded from the presentation of the findings, and smaller amendments were made in the selected excerpts. Although these actions were ethically necessary, it has the potential to weaken the trustworthiness and

strength of the findings, but I regarded the ethical responsibility towards the participants and their supervisors a higher priority. The trustworthiness of the data has been continuously kept in mind and taken into consideration in the choices made in the interpretation of the data and in the excerpts selected to represent the findings. Transparency of the research process and my influence on the data, as the researcher, has been prioritised to warrant as much trustworthiness as possible.

Limitations and strengths.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted true to the solution-focused stance as described in Chapter three, to allow the participants to be highly autonomous, and the interviews were conducted as a conversation which resulted in content that had some variation and differences. My choice of using a solution-focused approach in the interviews produced a valuable possibility for the participants to contribute with what they individually found essential and thereby strengthened the liability and relevance of the collected data. The frame and process used in the interviews initiated that the participants showed a high level of openness and honesty in the interviews which could potentially strengthen the quality of the data material (Brinkmann, 2012).

Thematic analysis was used successfully to answer my research question and provided a rich, detailed and insightful description of the participants' experience of solution-focused supervision. This qualitative analysis method worked well with the choice of using a social constructionist stance and the semi-structured interviews based on a solution-focused approach. I was informed by the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006), and I found that the advantages of using thematic analysis were mainly flexibility and the possibility to reveal unexpected and important themes in the findings. The thematic analysis was performed by using mind maps to organise and structure the data. The mind maps made it possible to keep an overview of the complexity of the collected data and made it accessible to familiarise myself with the data, to

remember the statements of the participants', the context and the details from the interviews by making the data visual and graphic.

Although the present study included both male and female counsellors and represented six different supervisors also both male and female, the sample size was small. The sample was varied however: the participants were experienced counsellors ranging from 14 to 32 years of experience, diverse ethnicities, and varying fields of professional counselling practice.

Almost all the participants were trained in a similar learning environment at universities in New Zealand, and over time most likely would have participated in similar professional development activities, so it is likely that their perception and description of solution-focused supervision is not representative of a broader field of counsellors. Thus, results may only be directly transferable to counsellors with similar backgrounds, but comparable research internationally could investigate if the proposed conclusions from this study can be considered in a broader field.

Because only supervisees were invited to reflect upon their solution-focused supervision, limitations are inevitably inherent in the one-sided nature of the descriptions of the solution-focused supervision. All the participants expressed some level of positive bias to the solution-focused approach which also must be taken into consideration when concluding from the data. Most of the participants were likewise positively biased towards the importance of clinical supervision for counsellors and also had a definite interest in this research study, which might be the rationale and motivation for responding positively to my recruitment request. Some of the participants were highly engaged in their professional association or active in the solution-focused counsellor community, and therefore they might not be generally representative of experienced counsellors in New Zealand.

Some of the aspects described by the participants in this study are common aspects in clinical supervision (Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007) and therefore not exclusively applicable for

solution-focused supervision but further research on solution-focused supervision might be able to elaborate on the effect and benefits of using a solution-focused approach in supervision.

A central limitation of this study was that the findings were shaped by my personal contribution to the interviews and my involvement in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. A researcher with another background could have located different findings in the collected data. Even though I have been careful to represent the perceptions of the interviewed experienced counsellors as carefully as possible, I acknowledge that the themes and the categories in this study are my constructions. A peer debriefing of the data could have strengthened the trustworthiness of data analysis and a focus group consisting of the participants could have supplemented with additional possible interpretations; but as described in Chapter three, those were opted out in the research process mainly due to ethical considerations.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study has shown some significant benefits of a solution-focused approach used in clinical supervision. Further research into what makes solution-focused supervision effective and useful could profit both counsellors when they are choosing a supervisor and subsequently supervisors when they choose their preferred supervision approach. This study has a high level of conformity between the modality of the counsellor and the supervisor, hence it would be beneficial to explore how solution-focused supervision might be useful for counsellors working from other modalities: a way of doing solution-focused supervision that has been described in literature (Rudes et al., 1997; Thomas, 2013) but not thoroughly researched.

Generally, there is little research on the effect of supervision on clients, and this study indicated that it could be worthwhile to research on the effect of solution-focused supervision on

client outcome and whether my participant's experience of "*a gift that does not stop going*" could be verified in further research studies.

I have become curious about whether solution-focused supervision might be able to influence and prevent compassion fatigue, stress, and burn-out for counsellors or other helping professionals and additionally be able to secure stability and longevity in those professions. A qualitative study based on such supervisees who shift to solution-focused supervision, and exploring their experience of workload, compassion fatigue and emotional burn-out, is warmly suggested.

This study gave a picture of what experienced counsellors choose to bring to solution-focused supervision and proposed that there might have been a change in the issues they bring over time in their practice as counsellors. For this reason, a research project that examines the differences in content for what is brought to supervision by less experienced and highly experienced counsellors could inform clinical supervisors and thereby potentially improve the quality of the counselling supervision.

This study suggests that an experienced counsellor's emphasis on the supervisory relationship was a significant factor in what they experienced as effective and helpful supervision. It also highlighted a need to explore whether different supervisory modalities present variations in the significance of a positive supervisory relationship.

This study suggests there is a need for further research into how experienced counsellors use and benefit from supervision. Further research into what experienced counsellors bring into supervision, how they see the role of supervision, and the influence on their professional development and professional practice, could inform counselling communities about their choices of career-long frequency and recommendations for clinical counselling supervision.

I would like to recommend qualitative researchers to use thematic analysis due to the possibilities of flexibility and innovation in the analysis and interpretation and at the same time maintaining the required level of quality and trustworthiness. Likewise, I can recommend more qualitative research to use mind maps to support the overview of the data and as an active tool in the analysing process to easily keep track on the content without deserting details. In my experience, it can make research analysis encompass elements of both creativity and pleasure.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that solution-focused supervision largely can fulfil the participating experienced counsellor's needs and expectations for clinical supervision, as defined in my study, of securing safe, ethical, and effective professional counselling practice, fostering learning, growth and professional development, and supplying restorative support.

This study indicate that solution-focused supervision might have potential to have a positive effect on client outcome. The participants' recurrent use of solution-focused language suggested that solution-focused supervision might have supported and enhanced their solution-focused stance and might positively influence their effectiveness and their professional practice. Research has shown that counsellors who genuinely believe in the modality chosen as their counselling approach are more likely to impact their clients positively (Duncan et al., 2004).

The way the participants described both their supervisor and their supervisory choices and the benefits from solution-focused supervision highlighted that the fundamental assumptions from the solution-focused approach of focusing on what works, on strengths, and on skills and resources, were integrated and implemented in their clinical counselling supervision. This study demonstrated a way of doing supervision that followed four of the central roles of supervision recommended by Ungar (2006) and described relevant to solution-focused supervision by Frank (2013): supporter,

supervisor, case consultant, and colleague; supervision roles which have all been present in the findings of my study.

A prominent occurrence in my study was how the participating experienced counsellors showed agency in their use of solution-focused supervision, highlighting the collaborative working alliance and the focus on their individual goals used effectively in solution-focused supervision. My study correlated with the literature that proposed the effectiveness of solution-focused supervision is a capacity to enhance the level of competence and professional practice, and happens when the supervision is shaped by and based on the needs, style, and experience of the counsellor (Thomas, 2013).

This study illustrated how a solution-focused approach was implemented in clinical supervision, and how the supervisory relationship, the role and the content of the supervision were based on the participants' reality, their situation, and their way of seeing the world. It was shown how the solution-focused supervision functioned as a professional conversation and that the supervisor worked as a consultant; essential elements in supervision based on a solution-focused approach as described in the literature (Campbell, 2000; Pichot, 2005; Thomas, 1994, 2013). In this study, a solution-focused approach used in clinical supervision seemed to inherit a warm and positive supervisory relationship built on mutual respect, a collaborative intention between the counsellor and the solution-focused supervisor to achieve a good outcome for the client, and the best possible counselling practice, and also showed how they shared the responsibility to reach those goals. Significantly, the participating counsellors' way of highly praising their supervisor and the solution-focused modelling nature of for example using compliments in the supervisory relationship, stands out. That element in the supervisory relationship can be found described similarly in Berg's description of solution-focused supervision methods (Rudes et al., 1997;

Thomas, 2013), highlighting how to create a positive working atmosphere by using compliments and giving credit to the counsellors.

My study showed how the participating counsellors felt supported, both as a professional and as a person. The solution-focused supervision seemed to be beneficial for the participating counsellors by prioritising the developmental element of supervision and accordingly became a safe place for the participants to present what they needed support for in supervision, a point also made by Mearns (1995). The findings specified how the participating counsellors felt assisted to be the best practitioner possible by focusing on their skills, abilities, and strengths and how they were offered consultancy and advice on best practice options when they needed it and when they asked for it. The study described how the participants and their solution-focused supervisors collaboratively explored useful solutions and interactions and how the participating counsellors felt encouraged to take action and advocate for their clients and themselves at their workplaces or when transitioning to something new.

Focus on professional development was a significant element and recurrent content in the solution-focused supervision and a remarkable component was how the participants described solution-focused supervision as their most influential professional development compared to training activities and courses. This study also suggest that solution-focused supervision might be a useful tool to prevent burn-out and support a balanced life by emphasising the importance of awareness on stress management and self-care as an essential function in the role of supervision.

References

- Alrø, H., & Kristiansen, M. (2008). *Supervision som dialogisk læreproces*. Aalborg, DK: Aalborg Universitetsforlag.
- Anderson, H. (2005). Myths about "not-knowing". *Family process*, 44(4), 497-504. doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.2005.00074.x
- Baker, E. K. (2003). *Caring for ourselves: A therapist's guide to personal and professional well-being*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bambling, M. (2000). The effect of clinical supervision on the development of counsellor competency. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 6(4), 58-63.
- Barnett, J. E., & Molzon, C. H. (2014). Clinical supervision of psychotherapy: Essential ethics issues for supervisors and supervisees. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 70(11), 1051-1061. doi:10.1002/jclp.22126
- Berg, I. K., & De Jong, P. (2005). Engagement through complimenting. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 16(1-2), 51-56. doi:10.1300/J085v16n01_11
- Berg, I. K., & Miller, S. D. (1992). *Working with the problem drinker: A solution-focused approach*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2009). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (Vol. 4). Upper Saddle River, N.J: Merrill/Pearson.
- Bliss, E. V., & Bray, D. (2009). The smallest solution focused particles: Towards a minimalist definition of when therapy is solution focused. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 28(2), 62-74. doi:10.1521/jsyt.2009.28.2.62
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (Vol. 5). Boston, MA: Pearson A & B.
- Bradley, L. J., & Ladany, N. (2001). *Counselor supervision: Principles, process, and practice* (3 ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Brunner-Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9, 26152-26152. doi:10.3402/qhw.v9.26152
- Braunstein, K., & Grant, A. M. (2016). Approaching solutions or avoiding problems? The differential effects of approach and avoidance goals with solution-focused and problem-focused coaching questions. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 9(2), 93-109. doi:10.1080/17521882.2016.1186705

- Briggs, J. R., & Miller, G. (2005). Success enhancing supervision. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 16(1-2), 199-222. doi:10.1300/J085v16n01_45
- Brinkmann, S. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in everyday life: Working with everyday life materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Buzan, T., & Buzan, B. (2000). *The mind map book*. London, England: BBC.
- Campbell, J. (2000). *Becoming an effective supervisor: A workbook for counselors and psychotherapists*. Hove, England: Accelerated Development.
- Carifio, M. S., & Hess, A. K. (1987). Who is the ideal supervisor? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 18(3), 244-250. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.18.3.244
- Cassedy, P. (2010). *First steps in clinical supervision: A guide for healthcare professionals*. Maidenhead, England: McGraw-Hill Open University Press.
- Chang, J. (2010). Hermeneutic inquiry: A research approach for postmodern therapists. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 29(1), 19-32. doi:10.1521/jsyt.2010.29.1.19
- Connie, E., & Metcalf, L. (2014). *The art of solution focused therapy: The masters speak*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- De Jong, P., & Berg, I. K. (2013). *Interviewing for solutions* (Vol. 4). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning.
- de Shazer, S. (1988). *Clues: Investigating solutions in brief therapy*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- de Shazer, S. (1997). Some thoughts on language use in therapy. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 19(1), 133-141. doi:10.1023/A:1026170718933
- de Shazer, S., Berg, I. K., Lipchik, E., Nunnally, E., Molnar, A., Gingerich, W., & Weiner-Davis, M. (1986). Brief therapy: Focused solution development. *Family process*, 25(2), 207-221. doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.1986.00207.x
- de Shazer, S., & Isebaert, L. (2004). The Bruges Model: A Solution-Focused Approach to Problem Drinking. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 14(4), 43-52. doi:10.1300/J085v14n04_04
- Dopson, L., & Gade, E. (1981). Kierkegaard's philosophy: Implications for counseling. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 60(3), 148-152. doi:10.1002/j.2164-4918.1981.tb00767.x
- Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., & Sparks, J. (2004). *The heroic client: A revolutionary way to improve effectiveness through client-directed, outcome-informed therapy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Durrant, M. (2016). Confessions of an unashamed solution-focused purist: What is (and isn't) solution-focused? *Journal of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy*, 2(1), 40-49.

- Durrant, M. (2017). *Solution-focused & strengths-based approach to supervision*. Supervision two-day Seminar. Course Manual. Compass Seminars NZ. Wellington
- Efstation, J. F., Patton, M. J., & Kardash, C. M. (1990). Measuring the working alliance in counselor supervision. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 37(3), 322-329. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.37.3.322
- Ellis, M. V., Berger, L., Hanus, A. E., Ayala, E. E., Swords, B. A., & Siembor, M. (2014). Inadequate and harmful clinical supervision: Testing a revised framework and assessing occurrence. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 42(4), 434-472. doi:10.1177/0011000013508656
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: Using our selves in research*. London, England: J. Kingsley Publishers.
- Fernando, D. (2007). Existential theory and solution-focused strategies: Integration and application. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 29(3), 226-241. doi:10.17744/mehc.29.3.r01582660404v734
- Franklin, C., Zhang, A., Froerer, A., & Johnson, S. (2017). Solution focused brief therapy: A systematic review and meta-summary of process research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 43(1), 16-30. doi:10.1111/jmft.12193
- Garff, J., & Kirmmse, B. H. (2005). *Søren Kierkegaard: A biography*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gazzola, N., & Theriault, A. (2007). Super- (and not-so-super-) vision of counsellors-in-training: Supervisee perspectives on broadening and narrowing processes. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 35(2), 189-204. doi:10.1080/03069880701256601
- Georgiadou, L. (2014). "My language thing ... is like a big shadow always behind me": International counselling trainees' challenges in beginning clinical practice. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 14(1), 10-18. doi:10.1080/14733145.2013.770896
- Grafanaki, S. (1996). How research can change the researcher: The need for sensitivity, flexibility and ethical boundaries in conducting qualitative research in counselling/psychotherapy. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 24(3), 329-338. doi:10.1080/03069889600760301
- Grant, A. M. (2012). Making positive change: A randomized study comparing solution-focused vs. problem-focused coaching questions. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 31(2), 21.
- Grant, A. M., & O'Connor, S. A. (2010). The differential effects of solution-focused and problem-focused coaching questions: A pilot study with implications for practice. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 42(2), 102-111. doi:10.1108/00197851011026090
- Griffin, A., & Christie, D. (2008). Taking the psycho out of psychosomatic: Using systemic approaches in a paediatric setting for the treatment of adolescents with unexplained physical symptoms. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 13(4), 531-542. doi:10.1177/1359104508096769

- Gubrium, J. F. (2012). *The Sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Guterman, J. T., & Rudes, J. (2008). Social constructionism and ethics: Implications for counseling. *Counseling and Values*, 52(2), 136-144. doi:10.1002/j.2161-007X.2008.tb00097.x
- Hair, H. J., & Fine, M. (2012). Social constructionism and supervision: Experiences of AAMFT supervisors and supervised therapists. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(4), 604-620. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2011.00255.x
- Hanley, T., Lennie, C., & West, W. (2013). *Introducing counselling and psychotherapy research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Hanton, P. (2011). *Skills in solution focused brief counselling & psychotherapy*. Thousand Oaks, CA;London;: SAGE.
- Harrison, J., MacGibbon, L., & Morton, M. (2001). Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative research: The rigors of reciprocity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(3), 323-345. doi:10.1177/107780040100700305
- Hawkins, P., & Shohet, R. (2006). *Supervision in the helping professions* (Vol. 3). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- IMindmap. (2017). IMindMap10. Retrieved from <https://imindmap.com/>
- Jacobsen, C. H. (2007). A qualitative single case study of parallel processes. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 7(1), 26-33. doi:10.1080/14733140601140410
- Jacobsen, C. H., & Tanggaard, L. (2009). Beginning therapists' experiences of what constitutes good and bad psychotherapy supervision. *Nordic Psychology*, 61(4), 59-84. doi:10.1027/1901-2276.61.4.59
- Jenks, C. J. (2011). *Transcribing talk and interaction: Issues in the representation of communication data*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Jennings, L., & Skovholt, T. M. (1999). The Cognitive, Emotional, and Relational Characteristics of Master Therapists. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 46(1), 3-11. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.46.1.3
- Johnson, W. B. (2007). Transformational supervision: When supervisors mentor. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38(3), 259-267. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.38.3.259
- Jones-Smith, E. (2016). *Theories of counseling and psychotherapy: An integrative approach* (Second ed. Vol. 2.).
- Juhnke, G. A. (1996). Solution-focused supervision: Promoting supervisee skills and confidence through successful solutions. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 36(1), 48-57. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.1996.tb00235.x

- Kazantzis, N., Calvert, S. J., Orlinsky, D. E., Rooke, S., Ronan, K., & Merrick, P. (2009). Activities influencing the professional development of New Zealand counsellors across their careers. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*, 29(1), 73-96.
- Kierkegaard, S., Lowrie, W., & Nelson, B. (1962). *The point of view for my work as an author: A report to history, and related writings*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Knight, C. (2004). Integrating solution-focused principles and techniques into clinical practice and supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 23(2), 153-173. doi:10.1300/J001v23n02_10
- Knox, S., & Burkard, A. W. (2009). Qualitative research interviews. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 566-575. doi:10.1080/10503300802702105
- Koob, J. J. (2003). The effects of solution-focused supervision on the perceived self-efficacy of therapists in training. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 21(2), 161-183. doi:10.1300/J001v21n02_11
- Kovač, J., Krečič, M. J., Čagran, B., & Mulej, M. (2016). Effect of supervision on stress and burnout in school counsellors: A case of action research. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 30(4), 395-406. doi:10.1007/s11213-016-9400-9
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (Vol. 2). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ladany, N., Mori, Y., & Mehr, K. E. (2013). Effective and ineffective supervision. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 41(1), 28-47. doi:10.1177/0011000012442648
- Lawton, B. (2000). 'A very exposing affair': Explorations in counsellors supervisory relationships. In B. Lawton & C. Feltham (Eds.), *Taking Supervision forward; Enquiries and Trends in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (pp. 25 - 41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Lennie, C., & West, W. (2010). Dilemmas in counselling psychology research. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 23(1), 83-89. doi:10.1080/09515071003665296
- Lenz, A. S., Oliver, M., & Sangganjanavanich, V. F. (2014). Perceptions of the wellness model of supervision among counseling interns. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 33(1), 45-62. doi:10.1080/07325223.2014.905814
- Lowe, R., & Guy, G. (2002). Solution-oriented inquiry for ongoing supervision: Expanding the horizon of change. In M. McMahon & W. Patton (Eds.), *Supervision in the helping professions: A practical approach* (pp. 143 - 155). Frenchs Forest, N.S.W: Pearson Education Australia.
- McKergow, M. (2016). Solution focused practice: Engaging with the client as a first person, rather than a third-person. *InterAction: The Journal of Solution-Focus in Organisations*, 8(1), 31-44.
- McKergow, M., & Korman, H. (2009). Inbetween - neither inside nor outside: The radical simplicity of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 28(2), 34.

- Mearns, D. (1995). Supervision: A tale of the missing client. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 23(3), 421-427. doi:10.1080/03069889500760411
- Miller, G., & de Shazer, S. (1998). Have You Heard the Latest Rumor about.? Solution-Focused Therapy as a Rumor. *Family process*, 37(3), 363-377. doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.1998.00363.x
- Miller, J. H. (2010). Does teaching a solution-focused model of counselling work? A follow-up of graduates. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 10(3), 173-182. doi:10.1080/14733140903229440
- Milne, D. (2009). *Evidence-based clinical supervision: Principles and practice*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Morgan, M. M., & Sprenkle, D. H. (2007). Toward a common-factor approach to supervision. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 33(1), 1-17. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2007.00001.x
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250
- Muir-Cochrane, E. C., & Fereday, J. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92. doi:10.1177/160940690600500107
- Neimeyer, R. A. (1998). Social constructionism in the counselling context. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 11(2), 135-149. doi:10.1080/09515079808254050
- Nelson, M. R., & Shavitt, S. (2002). Horizontal and vertical individualism and achievement values: A multimethod examination of Denmark and the United States. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33(5), 439-458. doi:10.1177/0022022102033005001
- New Zealand Association of Counsellors. (2015). NZAC Supervision Policy October 2015. Retrieved from http://www.nzac.org.nz/viewobj.cfm/nzac_supervision_policy_oct_2015.pdf?file_name=nzac_supervision_policy_oct_2015.pdf&objID=1675
- New Zealand Association of Counsellors. (2016). Code of Ethics 9. Professional Supervision. Retrieved from http://www.nzac.org.nz/viewobj.cfm/nzac_code_of_ethics_revised_2016.pdf?file_name=nzac_code_of_ethics_revised_2016.pdf&objID=88&f=true
- O'Connell, B. (1998). *Solution-focused therapy*. London, England: SAGE.
- Omand, L. (2010). What makes for good supervision and whose responsibility is it anyway? *Psychodynamic Practice*, 16(4), 377-392. doi:10.1080/14753634.2010.512124
- Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 695-705.

- Parsons, R. D. (2009). *Thinking and acting like a solution-focused school counselor*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.
- Pelling, N., Barletta, J., & Armstrong, P. (2009). *The practice of clinical supervision*. Bowen Hills, Australia: Australian Academic Press.
- Pichot, T. (2005). Thoughts from a solution-focused supervisor. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 16(1-2), 277-279. doi:10.1300/J085v16n01_51
- Presbury, J., Echterling, L. G., & McKee, J. E. (1999). Supervision for inner vision: Solution-focused strategies. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 39(2), 146-155. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.1999.tb01226.x
- Proctor, B. (1994). Supervision—competence, confidence, accountability. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 22(3), 309-318. doi:10.1080/03069889408253676
- Rakauskiene, V., & Dumciene, A. (2013). Alteration of adolescent self-efficacy when applying brief counseling at school. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 41(6), 893-899. doi:10.2224/sbp.2013.41.6.893
- Renfro-Michel, E. L., & Sheperis, C. J. (2009). The relationship between counseling supervisee attachment orientation and perceived bond with supervisor. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 28(2), 141-154. doi:10.1080/07325220903324306
- Roberts, R. C. (1995). Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and a method of "Virtue Ethics". In M. J. Matušík & M. Westphal (Eds.), *Kierkegaard in post / modernity* (pp. 142-166). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Roulston, K. (2014). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*. London: SAGE Publications. Retrieved from <http://methods.sagepub.com/book/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-data-analysis>. doi:10.4135/9781446282243
- Rudes, J., Shilts, L., & Berg, I. K. (1997). Focused supervision seen through a recursive frame analysis. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 23(2), 203-215. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.1997.tb00244.x
- Rønnestad, M. H., & Skovholt, T. M. (2001). Learning arenas for professional development: Retrospective accounts of senior psychotherapists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 32(2), 181-187. doi:10.1037//0735-7028.32.2.181
- Rønnestad, M. H., & Skovholt, T. M. (2003). The journey of the counselor and therapist: Research findings and perspectives on professional development. *Journal of Career Development*, 30(1), 5-44. doi:10.1177/089484530303000102
- Shurts, W. M. (2015). Infusing postmodernism into counseling supervision: Challenges and recommendations. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 7(3), 111-132. doi:10.7729/73.1134

- Skovholt, T. M., & Rønnestad, M. H. (1992). Themes in therapist and counselor development. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 70*(4), 505-515. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1992.tb01646.x
- Skovholt, T. M., & Rønnestad, M. H. (2003). The hope and promise of career life-span counselor and therapist development. *Journal of Career Development, 30*(1), 1-3. doi:10.1177/089484530303000101
- Skovholt, T. M., & Trotter-Mathison, M. (2016). *The resilient practitioner: Burnout and compassion fatigue prevention and self-care strategies for the helping professions* (Vol. 3). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stark, M. D., Garza, Y., Bruhn, R., & Ane, P. (2015). Student perceptions of sandtray in solution-focused supervision. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 10*(1), 2-17. doi:10.1080/15401383.2014.917063
- Stoltenberg, C. D., McNeill, B. W., & Crethar, H. C. (1994). Changes in supervision as counselors and therapists gain experience: A review. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 25*, 416-449. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.25.4.416
- Strickland, B. (1966). Kierkegaard and counseling for individuality. *Personnel & Guidance Journal, 44*(5), 470-474.
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. L. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (Vol. 4). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Thielst, P. (2013). *Livet forstås baglæns, men må leves forlæns: Historien om Søren Kierkegaard*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendal A/S.
- Thomas, F. N. (1994). Solution-oriented Supervision: The coaxing of expertise. *The Family Journal, 2*(1), 11-18. doi:10.1177/1066480794021003
- Thomas, F. N. (2013). *Solution-focused supervision: A resource-oriented approach to developing clinical expertise*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Tolich, M., & Davidson, C. (1998). *Starting fieldwork: An introduction to qualitative research in New Zealand*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Trenhaile, J. (2005). Solution-Focused Supervision. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy, 16*(1), 223-228. doi:10.1300/J085v16n01_46
- Triantafillou, N. (1997). A Solution-Focused Approach to Mental Health Supervision. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 16*(4), 305.
- Ungar, M. (2006). Practicing as a postmodern supervisor. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 32*(1), 59-71. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2006.tb01588.x
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences, 15*(3), 398-405. doi:10.1111/nhs.12048

- Waskett, C. (2006). The pluses of solution-focused supervision. *Healthcare Counselling & Psychotherapy Journal*, 6(1), 9-11.
- Watkins, C. E., Jr., & Milne, D. (2014). *The Wiley international handbook of clinical supervision*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Weeks, D. (2002). Unlocking the secrets of 'good supervision': A phenomenological exploration of experienced counsellors' perceptions of good supervision. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 2(1), 33-39. doi:10.1080/14733140212331384968
- West, W., & Clark, V. (2004). Learnings from a qualitative study into counselling supervision: Listening to supervisor and supervisee. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 4(2), 20-26. doi:10.1080/14733140412331383903
- Westergaard, J. (2013). Supervision in the helping professions: Making the case for support and supervision for career counsellors. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 22(1), 21-28. doi:10.1177/1038416213478805
- Wetchler, J. L. (1990). Solution-focused supervision. *Family Therapy*, 17(2), 129.
- Wheeldon, J., & Åhlberg, M. (2012). From the ground up: Using mind maps in qualitative research (pp. 79). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Wheeler, J. (2001). A helping hand: Solution-focused brief therapy and child and adolescent mental health. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 6, 293-306. doi:10.1177/1359104501006002009
- Wheeler, S., & Richards, K. (2007). The impact of clinical supervision on counsellors and therapists, their practice and their clients: A systematic review of the literature. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 7(1), 54-65. doi:10.1080/14733140601185274
- Whiting, M., & Sines, D. (2012). Mind maps: Establishing 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(1), 21.
- Worthen, V., & McNeill, B. W. (1996). A phenomenological investigation of "good" supervision events. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 43(1), 25-34. doi:10.1037//0022-0167.43.1.25
- Xu, J. (2010). The impact of postmodernism on counseling: Boon or bane? *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 32(1), 66-74. doi:10.1007/s10447-009-9090-4

Appendices

Appendix A - Certificate Compass Seminars NZ

Appendix B – Human Ethics Committee Approval

Appendix C - Information Sheet

Appendix D - Consent Form

Appendix E - Invitation to Participants

Appendix F – The Interview Guide

Appendix G - List of Mind Maps



Certificate of Attendance

Aase Bechsgaard

attended our seminar

'Supervision 2 day seminar with Michael Durrant, Wellington'

on

3 August 2017 & 4 August 2017

Total Hours of Teaching Time: 11 hours



Craig McKenzie

Craig McKenzie
Compass Seminars
www.compass.ac.nz

Appendix B – Human Ethics Committee Approval



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson
Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2017/60

18 July 2017

Aase Moellemose Bechsgaard
Health Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Aase

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "How Does Solution-Focused Supervision Respond to the Needs of Experienced Counsellors for Clinical Supervision and Professional Development?" has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 12th July 2017.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

pp. R. Robinson

Associate Professor Jane Maidment
Chair
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee

Appendix C - Information Sheet

Information Sheet



College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone: +64 29 128 4056
Email: aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz
1 August 2017

How does solution-focused supervision respond to the needs of experienced counsellors for clinical supervision and professional development?

Information Sheet for Participant.

My name is Aase Bechsgaard and I am a Master of Counselling Student at University of Canterbury. The purpose of my Master Thesis is to explore how solution-focused supervision responds to clinical supervision and professional development needs of experienced counsellors. The research will focus on the experienced counsellor's point of view. The study will be based on semi-structured interviews.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement in this project will be to participate in an interview estimated to 45 – 60 minutes. The interview can be performed at your office / practice or by Skype. The interview will be video recorded and subsequently transcribed by me.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. You may ask for your raw data to be returned to you or destroyed at any point. If you withdraw, I will remove information relating to you. However, once analysis of raw data starts on 1. August 2017, it will become increasingly difficult to remove the influence of your data on the results.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I will secure that no information is traceable to either you or your clinical supervisor. If it is essential to the understanding of the data, type of workplace will be mentioned. All transcription and analysis are done by me. I will store video-recordings, transcriptions and analysis on my private PC with a unique password and on a separate USB drive for back-up, which will be stored in a locked place when not at use. The material will also be saved on a safe database at the University of Canterbury for back-up. The material will only be accessed by me and my supervisors at University of Canterbury. The data will be destroyed 5 years after the submission of the Master Thesis. A Master thesis is a public document and will be available through the UCLibrary.

Please indicate on the consent form if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of results of the project.

The project is being carried out as a partial requirement for Master of Counselling by Aase Bechsgaard under the supervision of Dr. Lois Tonkin, who can be contacted at lois.tonkin@canterbury.ac.nz. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

Aase Bechsgaard

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return to aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz as soon as possible or you can give it to me before the interview.

Aase Bechsgaard
Postgraduate student
University of Canterbury

Aase Bechsgaard

Appendix D - Consent Form

Consent Form Template



College of Education, Health and Human Development
Telephone: +64 29 128 4056
Email: aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

How does solution-focused supervision respond to the needs of experienced counsellors for clinical supervision and professional development?

Consent Form for participant.

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the researcher's supervisors from University of Canterbury and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants, their workplace or clinical supervisor. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after 5 years.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher Aase Bechsgaard, aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz, or supervisor Dr. Lois Tonkin, lois.tonkin@canterbury.ac.nz for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.
- ☐ I confirm that I have _____ years of engagement in professional practice as a counsellor.

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Email address (for report of findings): _____

Please return to aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz as soon as possible or you can give it to me before the interview.

Aase Bechsgaard

Appendix E - Invitation to Participants



Aase Bechsgaard
Postgraduate Student
University of Canterbury
029 0128 04056
aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Dear supervisor,

Thanks for taking time to read this. I am a Master of Counselling Student at the University of Canterbury. I have a special interest in the influence and importance of supervision throughout a professional career.

I am researching how Solution-Focused supervision respond to the needs for clinical supervision and professional development for my thesis project at the University of Canterbury.

Most counsellors in New Zealand carry on participating in supervision throughout their continuous practice. This creates the possibility to explore if and how supervision makes a difference in their work. The research will focus on in what way experienced counsellors use their learning from supervision and how supervision is supporting their ongoing professional development.

I would be very grateful if you would give a hard copy or forward an email of the attached letter to any of your supervisees that are experienced counsellors currently participating in regular supervision, which is to some extent Solution-Focused.

If you are an experienced practicing counsellor yourself and would be interested to take part in the research project, please contact me for more information.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 029 128 4056 or aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Kind regards,

Aase Bechsgaard



aase.bechsgaard@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Dear experienced Counsellor.

Thanks for taking time to read my letter. I am a Master of Counselling Student at the University of Canterbury. I have a special interest in the influence and importance of supervision throughout a professional career.

Most counsellors in New Zealand carry on participating in supervision through their continuous practice. I am interested in exploring if and how supervision makes a difference.

In particular, I am interested in the Solution-Focused approach in supervision.

My Masters thesis will build on interviews with experienced counsellors and focus on how Solution-Focused supervision respond to the needs for clinical supervision and professional development.

If you are an experienced counsellor currently participating in regular supervision, which is to some extent solution-focused I would be grateful to hear from you.

If this has made you curious or you would be interested to take part in the research project please contact me on 029 128 4056 or aase.bechsgaard@pc.canterbury.ac.nz and I will send you more information.

Kind regards,

Aase Bechsgaard

Appendix F – The Interview Guide

In what ways was your recent solution-focused supervision session useful for you?

What did you notice that was particularly helpful for you? What else?

What question asked by your supervisor was especially influential? In what ways did that question start a conversation that initiated leaning?

What are your best hopes from your solution-focused supervision?

When solution-focused supervision has been useful for you and your work with your clients, what do you notice happens in the counselling sessions? What else? How do you know?

What do you do differently in your professional work as a counsellor based on your solution-focused supervision?

In what ways do your solution-focused supervision fulfil your needs for support when you come across complications, are in trouble, or run short of options? How do you know?

What difference does that make for you as a practitioner?

How do you see the role of supervision in terms of professional development compared to other types of professional development?

If you have any worries about solution-focused supervision, what would that be? How have you (and your supervisor) managed to compensate for that?

Appendix G - List of Mind Maps

Figure 1: Theme 1: A Solution-Focused Approach used in Supervision	59
Figure 2: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category A: Effect of solution-focused questions	60
Figure 3: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category B: Solution-focused techniques	62
Figure 4: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category C: Sharing and celebrating successes.....	63
Figure 5: Theme 1 A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category D: Reminded of skills and resources	65
Figure 6: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category E: Validation and affirmation.....	66
Figure 7: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category F: Modelling the solution-focused stance	68
Figure 8: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category G: Takeaway from solution-focused supervision.....	69
Figure 9: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category H: Limitations...	71
Figure 10: Theme 1: A solution-focused approach used in supervision – Category I: Compensate.	73
Figure 11: Theme 2: The Supervisory Relationship	77
Figure 12: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category A: Description	78
Figure 13: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category B: Longevity.....	79
Figure 14: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship - Category C: Choice	82
Figure 15: Theme 2: The supervisory relationship – Category D: Supporter.....	86
Figure 16: Theme 3: The Role of Solution-focused Supervision	90
Figure 17: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Support.....	91
Figure 18: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Sharing and being reminded.....	92
Figure 19: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Emotional response.	93
Figure 20: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Safety	96
Figure 21: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Good practice	99
Figure 22: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Effect on clients and colleagues.....	100
Figure 23: Theme 3: The role of solution-focused supervision – Category F: Learning.....	102
Figure 24: Theme 4: The Content of Solution-focused Supervision	105
Figure 25: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category A: Combination of issues	106
Figure 26: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category B: Casework.....	108
Figure 27: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category C: Workplace and colleagues.....	109
Figure 28: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category D: Personal issues	110

Figure 29: Theme 4: The content of solution-focused supervision – Category E: Professional development 113